Between Philosophy and Social Science: The Problem of Harm in Critical Theory and International Studies

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Thesis Summary

In varying ways, scholars working in the discipline of International Studies have found themselves, often implicitly, wrestling with the question of what should and should not count as harm and the implications of this for wider social life. Core to this tension is the way in which the discipline can be understood as lying between the explanatory concerns of a social science and a normative endeavour concerned with the reduction or mitigation of avoidable harm. This thesis argues that this tension results in an understanding of the problem of harm as a particular problem-field defined by a set of questions that motivate various aspects of theoretical activity. However, it attempts to address the problem of harm as a whole through the lens of Frankfurt School Critical Theory. In doing so, it aims to draw out the implications of the problem of harm for the discipline of International Studies and social science more broadly.

The importance accorded to the problem of harm in Critical Theory is the source of considerable problems for an understanding of how social science might operate due to the way that normative concern serves to overwhelm attempts at explanation. This thesis considers Linklater's sociology of harm conventions a way of rebalancing this equation such that some practical conclusions may be drawn. However, the theoretical underpinnings of this project in the process sociology of Norbert Elias serve to preclude sufficient engagement with normative questions. A reconstruction of the sociology of harm conventions through the ontology of critical realism serves to resituate the production of sociological knowledge with regard to normative concern, and re-theorise the link between them. Following this reconstruction it becomes possible, through Critical Theory, to address the kind of theory that is needed in order to interrogate the problem of harm in International Studies.

For Lexi-Louise, in anticipation.

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In the first instance my supervisors, Milja Kurki and Charalampos Efstathopoulos, have shown me the greatest patience throughout the rewrites, rethinks and epistemological dilemmas that accompany any PhD project. In their absence, this thesis would contain far more unnecessary digressions than it does now, and its structure would be questionable at best. Other members of staff whose influence was crucial include Kamila Stullerova and Hidemi Suganami. Andrew Linklater, whose willingness to indulge my questions can only be understood as gracious, deserves special thanks. I sincerely hope that he understands this project as the constructive critique and engagement with his ideas that it is intended to be.

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Finally, I would like to thank my parents, whose indulgence of my passion for reading and learning started this journey off. This thesis is dedicated to my niece, Lexi-Louise.

Contents

Introduction

‘I have thus endeavoured to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations.’

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*[1]

It is entirely possible that, due to unfair working practices and the exploitation of labour, the person that built your smartphone committed suicide shortly afterwards. Moreover, it is almost certain that despite your participation in this situation through the provision of a consumer base for the production of such commodities, you are unlikely to ever find out about this beyond a brief mention in the international section of your national paper, which apportions no blame to be laid at your feet.[2] These events, in which we can see the problems and consequences that come with lengthening chains of global interconnection, serve to reveal the ever-more-complex ways in which subjects around the world are confronted with the harm that they may do to others, or which may be inflicted upon them. More particularly, they show the changeable nature of harm and the demands that it can place upon us in terms of ethical response. Forms of social activity which were previously not considered as ethically problematic, such as mineral extraction or transportation, are now increasingly considered to be harmful to the prospects of species survival in the context of global warming. In more immediate spheres of social life, practices of subjugation, once external to us in the context of slavery or colonialism, now sit within our frameworks of moral concern.

It is clear from these examples that the concept of harm, despite its prevalence in social affairs, does not refer to a single thing or behaviour but is adapted to many different

[1] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.
[2] When asking the question of whether he is to blame, Joel Johnson of *Wired* claims that he is, even if ‘just a little’. See Brita, ‘1 Million Workers. 90 Million iPhones. 17 Suicides. Who’s to Blame?’, *WIRED*, 28 February 2011.

aspects of social life. Furthermore, the set of behaviours or objects to which it can be attributed are highly changeable. Nonetheless, it seems to be the case that the idea of harm operates as a key aspect of moral concern and as a principle of restraint in the way that subjects interact with others, found in most if not all societies that we are hitherto familiar with.[3] In short, the way in which normative commitments and obligations to others change is at least partially a function of the way in which we see and understand what counts as harm. In engaging with the idea of harm and the way it changes, this thesis is therefore concerned with the social activity that subjects engage in when they consider how they might live while minimising, directing or in some way controlling the harm that they, or we, do to each other across different times and contexts.[4]

An engagement with harm as it changes and adapts is made ever more necessary by the way in which harmful consequences arise, often seemingly beyond our control, from changes in the configuration of social life, whether technological development or changing resource needs. In this regard, there is an important debate to be had over the development of drone warfare and the distribution and expropriation of water resources, just as there is over the consequences of more readily visible forms of harm such as war or torture. In this regard, the deployment of the term 'harm' to describe such practices serves to bring the practice within the sphere of ethical concern and to reject the interpretation of processes as natural or politically neutral. Attempts to evaluate a form of behaviour or interaction as harmful thus forces us to consider that there is more at stake than merely 'getting things done' in an efficient or timely manner and that there is some value in the thing, person or population that is harmed. It is possible that such processes of consideration may result in us qualifying or rejecting a given form of social engagement, as we can see in the case of the Geneva Conventions.[5] In this case, it is not just that war – as perhaps the archetypical area of concern for International Studies (IS) – is 'the continuation of politics by other means', but also that this form of activity is subject to a particular form of ethical concern that is at issue; there is

[3] Andrew Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations*, 1st Edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5.

[4] Each of the elements of this categorisation will be problematized later in the thesis. Nonetheless, it is necessary to highlight that there are qualitative distinctions at play here; the question of who the 'other is' remains a persistent problem, but also the normative impulse to 'minimise', an action that only makes sense if there is, in some sense, a pre-existing hierarchy of what it means to harm and be harmed with a peculiarly quantitative focus.

[5] 'Geneva Conventions', *Legal Information Institute*, 6 August 2007.

an ethical hierarchy to the ways in which it is possible to harm which makes some forms of social interaction more permissible than others.

However, it is also the case that the inverse is true and that there are forms of social interaction that are not considered as harmful. This is complicated by the fact that social life is characterised by a continuous stream of new actions, events, relations and technologies, the consequences of which are not immediately apparent. The fundamental uncertainty which characterises our orientation toward the future ensures that for humanity at least, a propensity toward invention and rationalisation is matched by the possibility of uncertain outcomes at every step. We thus live with an anxiety that is underpinned by the knowledge that our ethical judgements and principles may have been left behind by technological or social change. The opportunity that the concept of harm presents us with – to consider and restrain our forms of social practice – is thus based on our broader capacity to describe and explain our interactions with ourselves, with others and with nature. In short, what we consider harmful is influenced by the words with which we describe society in the first place. These accounts may provide us with a basis for putting forward the understanding of an aspect of social interaction as harmful, but also have the potential to push forms of suffering outside of the sphere of moral concern through practices of exclusion and delimitation. In this case, the idea of harm that is at play with a given subject or community offers a point of reference that mediates between the position of an actor, their preconceptions, and ability to act, thus enabling and constraining forms of behaviour. By way of example, the disparate groups that came to be known as the Levellers were involved in espousing a concern with exploitation on a theological basis as well as on an understanding of the material situation of famine that so often pertained. If one had occurred without the other, it is likely that the results of efforts at reformation in England would have looked dramatically different.[6] As well as developing ideas of harm through discourse and negotiation, then, we also receive them through tradition, upbringing and authority.

While the specific role that the concept of harm has played has varied in its concept and application, the imbuing of accounts with moral or ethical concern in this fashion can be

[6] Hill argues that despite a few attempts at the construction of a holist materialist worldview, the answers that were grasped at in the attempt to overthrow particular doctrines were always theological in nature because the newfound historical conditions could only be understood through means already familiar to the participants. See his account of sin and hell in the English Revolution, Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, New Edition (Penguin, 1991), 151–83.

seen as playing a role in many of the concerns of IS, and of social thought more broadly.[7] The various manifestations of the 'distant strangers' problem in moral philosophy highlight the problem of the duties we owe to strangers who fall outside of the sphere of 'our' community.[8] Answers to these basic issues of the quality of our relationships with others, and what we owe them, have had significant effects; work done by Wheeler suggests that it has knock-on effects for our ability to conceptualise practices such as humanitarian intervention.[9] In a sphere such as international politics which is by definition wrought by forms of social division, that people outside of our immediate communities can be harmed in a way that demands a response is, then, by no means given. The tragedy of the commons, which highlights the way that collective gains are undermined by egocentric behaviour further typifies the close ties between narrativisation, boundary setting, and the problem of harm in collective action.[10] In this instance, we see that our ability to construct stories that construct interests as shared is one possible way to overcome the harm we do to others in a negative sense, by omission or complicity in the deprivation of others. From this standpoint, the development of the League of Nations following the First World War was as much a way of developing collective identity as it was a set of formal rules aimed at the avoidance of war.[11] Such principles can function, in some circumstances, to overcome the immediate interest we might have in engaging in such behaviour. These examples suggest the possibility that work conducted in IS contributes to debates around harm by providing, modifying and developing a vocabulary attuned to such issues. It does so by bringing objects into view and debating their ethical import; this does not merely include abstract theorisations of justice in war, but also the more fundamental constituents of international life such as women, the environment, or refugees.

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[7] But see Feinberg on the development of harm's centrality to liberal jurisprudence, in particular Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law Volume 1: Harm to Others* (Oxford University Press, 1984); Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law Volume 4: Harmless Wrongdoing*, New Edition (Oxford University Press, 1990).

[8] Toni Erskine, *Embedded Cosmopolitanism: Duties to Strangers and Enemies in a World of 'Dislocated Communities'* (OUP/British Academy, 2008).

[9] Work done on this in International Studies has come to the conclusion that approaches to the problem lead to competing approaches to the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers : Humanitarian Intervention in International Society: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 49.

[10] As can be seen in Johnson's argument for collective agreements in addressing uncoordinated resource use. Baylor L. Johnson, 'Ethical Obligations in a Tragedy of the Commons', *Environmental Values* 12, no. 3 (2003): 271–287.

[11] For a study of the kind of internationalism the League embodied, see Patricia Clavin and Jens-Wilhelm Wessel, 'Transnationalism and the League of Nations: Understanding the Work of Its Economic and Financial Organisation', *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (November 2005): 465–492.

Harm in International Studies

Our argument is that if the examples given above highlight the deeply international and connected character of contemporary life and its relation to the problem of harm, then the discipline whose substantive concerns include 'encounters between difference across boundaries' is surely well placed to address it.[12] From its earliest phases, International Studies has been oriented toward the informing of practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, such that the discipline has consistently been involved in debates that contribute to the understanding, minimisation or management of harm between individuals and groups. Such debates began with concern for the causes and meanings of war and have developed to encompass broader concerns over the effects of power in conjunction with a deep interest in ethical and moral reasoning. Whether the links between people should be subject to moral concern, or indeed that they might be understood as substantive links at all, has been subject to explanation and critique in the discipline and reflect back upon the ways that we conceptualise and practice community. Theoretical debate concerning the process of 'right explanation' therefore have direct knock-on effects on our ability to explicate the problem of harm in particular historical contexts; the inclusion, exclusion and relationship between different objects and processes of explanation thus has implications for the kind of contribution the discipline can make to social life.

The primary aim here is not to put forward a definitive understanding of International Studies as a discipline, but to engage in a reading of the discipline such that the discipline's consistent engagement in debates concerning harm becomes apparent. It is now common conviction that the discipline functions along evaluative premises at least since Cox's seminal statement concerning the purposive nature of theory.[13] However, reading the discipline specifically in terms of harm will allow us to draw out these consequences at a more general level, asking after the broad consequences of such evaluative concerns beyond specific debates, critiques and rebuttals. Approaching the discipline with a synthetic, rather than fragmentary, mindset somewhat runs contrary to the trend whereby new contributions are likely to lead to further splits in the discipline rather than overcoming or moving beyond

[12] Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, 'Must International Studies Be a Science?', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 43, no. 3 (1 June 2015).
[13] Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 10 (1981).

particular tendencies.[14] However, we will argue that harm allows us to identify common features of the discipline that lead us to understand it as a form of debate that is centred upon a common ethical object.

The importance of the problem of harm for the discipline can be seen as far back as the early debate between Idealists and Realists. While concern has been raised over the exact nature of this debate – the supposedly realist and idealist camps bleeding into each other to an extent – its status as the founding myth of disciplinary consolidation ensures its continued relevance.[15] The controversy, occurring around the end of the First World War, concerned the varying ways in which statist oriented realists and the more internationalist idealists understood the potential for mitigating war and violence that lay with various forms of international organisation. It thus bears significantly on an understanding of international life with regard to the problem of violent harm in particular; idealists argued for the mitigation potential that institutions such as the League of Nations held out, while realists criticised this line of thinking for hubris and a lack of understanding of the dynamics inherent to the international system.[16] Fundamental to this concern were the different modes of explanation held by each party which underpinned their proscriptions, and in particular the value each placed on the prevalence, power and direction of the interconnections between various aspects of international life. In short, a shared commitment to the informing of practical conduct in the sphere of international politics ensured that different approaches to the question of war – a form of harm which continues to be a chief object of concern in the discipline – result in remarkably different approaches to ethical conduct in the international sphere.

Developments in IS have consistently run up against this dynamic, and continue to do so. Indeed, emerging challenges to the hegemony of realism can be read not just as articulating a fundamental error or exclusion in the story of anarchy as the fundamental truth of international relations, but often articulate this in relation to its potentially harmful implications for those that fall outside of the great game of states. In the face of realism's rendering of the state as the source of infinite concern through which the protection of citizens from harm can be best accomplished, approaches such as gender, green and

[14] Stefano Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold* (Routledge, 1998), 107.
[15] On the history of the discipline in this regard, see Lucian M. Ashworth, 'Where Are the Idealists in Interwar International Relations?', *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 2006): 291–308.
[16] Ibid., 295–96.

postcolonial theory have all drawn attention to the neglected constituents of the prevailing social order. In expanding our understanding of the constituent elements of past and present social 'states of play', they do not merely allow us to correct or modify prevalent accounts, but revise the evaluative element of the discipline itself, and particularly its concern with the harm done to a variety of subjects and objects of concern.

This narrative is not to be understood as a strictly historical list of facts – few authors in the discipline have engaged with the question of harm under that name – but an engagement with the discipline on a level which attempts to highlight the implicit and explicit value judgements inherent in any form of active intellectual engagement.[17] This requires a step away from the specificities of accounts of social life, and towards an investigation of the broader *kinds* of debate that are had in International Studies, inclusive of the kind of vocational commitments put forward by Weber.[18] International Studies, as a social activity, itself requires investigation as a site of contestation and negotiation over what should and should not count as harm and which can be found as a broad (although often unacknowledged) current that underpins disciplinary interventions, as we will see in the first chapter. These interventions, particularly outside the sphere of mainstream developments, often rest on their ability to do justice to new or unacknowledged forms of harm such as sexual violence, environmental degradation or the persistence of colonial exploitation and appropriation. In such debates, it is not merely the scientific question of what an object is that is at issue, but the potential social and ethical implications that follow from providing particular accounts of it and the way in which these might become restricted.

The puzzle for this thesis therefore concerns the dynamic that pertains between the task of 'getting things right' in a scientific sense, and 'getting things right' in an ethical one. If, as we suggest, IS is part of a broader social debate that goes beyond its disciplinary boundaries, then it is possible to investigate the consequences of its concern with the problem of harm in a way that may have implications for the conduct of enquiry in the discipline. However, making such connections in a discipline that is characterised by fragmentation is likely to run up against several objections, foremost among which is the characterisation of the discipline as in some way unified under the banner of harm. This is, as we shall see, certainly not the case. Various schools of thought, from Realism to Postcolonialism, hold to different hierarchies in ethical judgement and sources of concern. Nonetheless, it is fitting

[17] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 9.
[18] Max Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', 1919, 5.

with the scientific ideal that we can understand such differences and tensions to be part of a process of negotiation and debate; while our understanding of harm does not exhaust this process, it is nonetheless a consistent and important aspect of it. This would allow us to examine the role that the problem of harm plays, and can play, more directly.

The Sociology of Harm Conventions

Andrew Linklater's sociology of harm convention has attempted to examine the negotiation of different ideas of harm, with the aim being to trace the changing ways in which people have responded to it over the course of long-term historical processes.[19] This line of investigation, he argues, can serve to investigate the possibility of more inclusive and responsive formulations of the harm conventions that underpin any society that exists over time. [20] While this may initially seem abstract, Linklater is not arguing for an ideal philosophy of harm, but rather that we might examine the dynamics underpinning the ways in which it arises.[21] Given that the vocabulary with which it is described varies, however, it is possible to draw a family resemblance between historically varied concepts in order to bring out their common element; it is not that they are identical, but that they are similar enough, and perform similar enough functions, to draw useful comparisons. Linklater's focus on the experience of suffering, through which he links the problem of harm to common features of human life, allows him to do this with a minimal 'labour of translation' between different historical instances, allowing us to recognise a common element between different instances of , for example, exploitation, or of complicity in harmful practices.[22] The argument, therefore, is not that suffering is identical between subjects – quite the opposite due to its inherently private element – but that nonetheless subjects can *recognise* the suffering in others through a process of empathy and understanding.

Placing suffering at the core of attempts to explain and understand harm is an important move for a project that intends to ground ethical action in common interests. In effect, Linklater is arguing that the processes through which we attempt to come to terms with suffering is a key point from which the problem of harm develops, allowing subjects to

[19] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 262.
[20] Andrew Linklater, 'Citizenship, Humanity and Cosmopolitan Harm Conventions', in *Critical Theory and World Politics* (Routledge, 2007), 132.
[21] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*.
[22] Andrew Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"', in *Critical Theory and World Politics* (Routledge, 2007), 181.

draw on their own embodiment and suffering as a common point of reference from which subjects interact with others in an ethically grounded way. These common features can be understood as the basis for many past and contemporary harm conventions, which intercede between the ability to harm and shared vulnerabilities.[23] While new ideas of harm, such as that done to the environment, are less reliant on the decisive action of individuals and operate more as collective outcomes, it is certainly the case that the accounts that we give of harm still often rely on the shared capacity for the private experience of suffering as a way of bridging the gap between the outcomes of social activity and ethical concern. In short, it is our ability to empathise with the suffering of others that allows us to consider our relatively small contributions to global warming, financial instability and so on as potentially harmful behaviours. Moreover, putting forward harmful social outcomes as something that we all contribute to raises the possibility that social scientific accounts can engage in work that contributes to conventions and institutions governing the permissibility of forms of harm. These accounts - the sociology of harm conventions - move beyond the problematic particular conceptions of harm put forward in philosophical approaches, instead providing an empirical ground for more qualitative questions about how we might begin to address it.[24] In doing so, Linklater's approach suggests that IS might benefit from drawing upon the level of analysis and synthetic approach that process sociology offers.

Linklater's sociology thus contributes to the debate over harm in IS by reframing it as a sociological problem, rather than one that is subject to purely philosophical examination. It is not the case that we can formulate an *ideal* concept of harm, but that communities are involved in a shared labour of constructing and contributing toward ethically-charged ideas of what is at stake in forms of behaviour, some of which are part of broader processes of civilization. In this regard, we begin to move away from the concept of harm as holding some absolute truth or definition, and toward what he understands as *the problem of harm*.[25] This term is an inevitably crude attempt to circumscribe the social activity that we undertake when we engage in the question of how we live while minimising the harm we do to each other.[26]

[23] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 30.
[24] Ibid., 23.
[25] Ibid., 6.
[26] Each of the elements of this categorisation will be problematized later in the thesis. Nonetheless, it is necessary to highlight that there are qualitative distinctions at play here; the question of who the 'other is' remains a persistent problem, but also the normative impulse to 'minimise', an action that only makes sense if there is, in some sense, a pre-existing hierarchy of what it means to harm and be harmed with a peculiarly quantitative focus.

Linklater's sociology is, therefore, an empirical investigation into what harm can be, rather than a purely theoretical investigation into what it should mean. More particularly, it allows us to understand the way that the problem of harm is deeply implicated in social change and development, thereby situating it within broader social and relational dynamics rather than as an ahistorical or transcendental 'good' that we can strive toward. Such an investigation is intended to perform an orienting function through which normative and critical work can be empirically grounded and take into account the directions, possibilities and tendencies of social change and development.[27]

The function that Linklater envisions for the sociology of harm conventions arises from his engagement with the process sociology developed initially by Norbert Elias.[28] Elias' process sociological framework is of particular interest to Linklater due to its focus on the kind of affective and empathetic relationships that he sees are core to the problem of harm; the emotive response it provokes can be seen to have ready parallels in work done by Elias concerning shame and embarrassment.[29] This framework further offers Linklater a way of focussing on the complex processes of interconnection and interpenetration through which normative concepts come about. Harm conventions in this sense are not optional but essential to social life inclusive of whatever problems they may bring. Elias' rejection of the idea of the atomistic subject common to liberal and Enlightenment thought and his adoption of a model of 'open persons' provides a way to approach the process by which harm conventions come about not as some ideal progression toward freedom or domination, but as messy, complex and subject to sudden reversals and changes of direction. Social life, rather than governed by abstract dualistic terms such as 'structure' and 'agency' are instead dynamic complexes – figurations – that are subject to balances of power that change over time.[30] The problem of harm can be understood as an expression of the ethical dimension of these processes. Elias' contribution to this was to 'advise against trying to ascertain whether 'power' has been more influential than 'morality' in shaping modern society', as the task was

[27] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 7.
[28] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*; Andrew Linklater, 'Norbert Elias, The "Civilizing Process" and the Sociology of International Relations', *International Politics* 41, no. 1 (March 2004): 3–35; Andrew Linklater, 'Dialogic Politics and the Civilising Process', *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 141–54; Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"'.
[29] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 211.
[30] Norbert Elias, *What Is Sociology?*, trans. Stephen Mennell and Grace Morrissey (London: Hutchinson, 1978), 71.

to study 'how they evolved together as part of the reconfiguration of social bonds'.[31] In doing so, he formed the basis for an account of society that decisively rejected the separation of ethical and political life.

The characteristic focus of Eliasian process sociology in studying these dynamics is upon long-term changes in human conduct and restraint, over generations or longer. This allows the social scientist to take account of the way in which social life is a shared labour, and any given person is part of a 'chain of generations' across which changes taking years, decades or centuries might play out.[32] Rather than static 'state-reducing' concepts, Elias argued that it was better to put forward 'process' concepts that were better able to account for change; *informal* become *informalisation*, *bureaucracy* becomes *bureaucratisation*, and so on.[33] This basic theoretical point, however, is carried over into Elias' major empirical contribution and a key theoretical touchstone for Linklater's understanding of harm – processes of civilisation.[34] These processes, taken together, comprise the various ways by which peoples come to understand themselves as civilised and involve patterns of restraint and permissiveness in the interaction of people with others inside or outside their immediate community. Putting this forward as a sociological contribution to our understanding of the forms of conduct we see in the international realm, Linklater suggests that the problem of harm is one way we might investigate the potential for a high-level, even global, civilising process that influences behaviour at the highest level of interconnection humans have yet achieved. In order to do so, it is first important to develop a higher level synthesis in the social sciences that is able to analyse these broad processes in the face of countervailing tendencies which result in scientific specialisation and fragmentation.[35]

A further result of this reformulation of social life is that the sciences are not privileged with a 'view from nowhere', but operate in relation to society. Contrary to the

[31] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 187.
[32] Norman Gabriel and Stephen Mennell, 'Handing over the Torch: Intergenerational Processes in Figurational Sociology', in *Norbert Elias and Figurational Research: Processual Thinking in Sociology* (Blackwell, 2011), 5–6.
[33] Eric Dunning and Jason Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 51.
[34] Linklater, 'Dialogic Politics and the Civilising Process'; Andrew Linklater, 'Norbert Elias, the Civilizing Process and the Sociology of International Relations', in *Critical Theory and World Politics* (Routledge, 2007); Andrew Linklater, 'Global Civilizing Processes and the Ambiguities of Human Interconnectedness', *European Journal of International Relations*, 26 April 2010; Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 2nd Edition (Wiley-Blackwell, 2000).
[35] Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"', 178.

characteristic focus of the philosophy of science upon claims to validity, truth and objectivity, we find that work inspired by Elias' approach focusses on the way that the production of knowledge is subject to balances of involvement and detachment with regard to their object of study.[36] The natural sciences can be seen as holding to a rather more detached view than the social sciences, which have historically been characterised by forms of involvement that surreptitiously influence the kinds of ethical judgement that disciplines such as sociology and International Studies arrive at.[37] By formulating a model that allows empirical testing of hypotheses, however, it may be possible to ground social science upon a more detached approach which combines theoretical and empirical approaches, and is less amenable to subjective concern and more adequate to its object of study.[38] The preoccupation of social science, for the time being, should lie with the collection of more object-adequate knowledge, with potential ethical concern and engagement being a task that can be approached once this 'detour via detachment' has been conducted.[39]

A broader possibility that arises from this reformulation of the activity of social science concerns the way that IS itself might operate as an expression – and perhaps potentially a pioneer – of the trends and negotiations that concern the problem of harm. It is this possibility that will be central to the work conducted in this thesis. The tension that we observed above with regard to the potential consequences of social scientific accounts for broader social life are not to be understood purely as objective measures of gathering and weighing potential accounts of harm against each other, but are contributions to the wider debate that we understand as being constituted by the problem of harm. The practice of (social) science, in this case, can be situated within broader structures of power and knowledge and contribute to the construction and reconstruction of particular understandings with potential ethical consequences. The aim of Linklater's framework is to operate as a synthetic tool in order to facilitate a greater degree of scientific or objective adequacy to this

[36] Norbert Elias, 'Problems of Involvement and Detachment', *The British Journal of Sociology* 7, no. 3 (1 September 1956): 226–52; Richard Kilminster, 'Norbert Elias's Post-Philosophical Sociology: From "critique" to Relative Detachment', *The Sociological Review* 59 (2011): 91–116; André Saramago, 'Problems of Orientation and Control: Marx, Elias and the Involvement–Detachment Balance in Figurational Sociology', *Human Figurations* 4, no. 2 (March 2015).
[37] Elias, 'Problems of Involvement and Detachment'.
[38] Kilminster, 'Norbert Elias's Post-Philosophical Sociology', 108.
[39] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 163.

process such that the resulting contribution of the social sciences more broadly is less subject to the ideological biases that it has historically been associated with.[40]

The Foundations of a Critical Theory

This argument – that the sociology of harm conventions can provide a point of synthesis for the wider discipline due to its orienting function – can be understood as the starting point for the work undertaken here. In particular, the clear normative consequences of such a framework and how these operate need to be understood if the discipline is to be consistent in its task of situating enquiry in a historical fashion and with a reflexive grasp of its own biases and presuppositions. In this regard, Linklater is clear in outlining the normative content of his project despite the Elias' more circumspect approach to the relationship between normative issues and sociological enquiry.[41]

In this regard, Linklater maintains an affinity with the Frankfurt School that has characterised his work throughout his career, both agreeing with the capacity to sympathise with others can provide a basis for solidarity, and with the belief that academic and theoretical work can contribute toward this effort.[42] The parallels between Linklater's project and the trajectory of the thinkers that constituted the first generation of Critical Theory, however, are noted but not systematically followed up in the course of *The Problem of Harm in World Politics.*[43] It is significant that these links are not explored more fully in Linklater's work, as the contributions of an area of thought so concerned with the implications of suffering for attempts to understand the world may have consequences that are not fully accounted for in the course of his investigation. Examining the characteristic focus of Critical Theory upon aspects of what we have described as the problem of harm therefore may serve as a way of greater understanding its implications for the kind of social science that might do greater justice to it.

Indeed, a significant aspect of this investigation will concern the way in which the critical import of sociological knowledge must be *of a particular form* if it is to be more than just discourse, or if it wishes to articulate a substantive case for the amelioration of harmful

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 23.
[42] Ibid.
[43] For points at which Linklater addresses this relationship, see Ibid., 3, 23, 106, 121, 191, 229.

practices. In putting forward an idea of social science that is oriented toward harm conventions, and in particular one that has a practical purpose, the problems of knowledge production with which social science has been concerned become all the more accentuated.[44] While greater attention to the specific understanding of these issues posed by Critical Theory will be considered later in the thesis, we will argue that they run along three main axes, the *threefold problematic* raised by the problem of harm:

- The problem of object adequacy, or the question of what it is to be correct in our accounts of the world;
- The problem of critical value, which concerns the impact that our changing ideas of harm has upon the world;
- The problem of reflexivity, through which we consider how we might alter and become aware of new forms of harm that arise from our changing understandings of it as a form of worldly activity.

These problems arise from the process of interrogation that has been a key contribution of Critical Theory to the discipline and, as we shall see, are characteristic of its way of engaging with social life more broadly. Each is not separate from the others, but instead reveals different aspects of the problem of harm and its relationship to the practice of social science. While they are problems that are often raised in debates between schools of thought or between disciplines more widely, Critical Theory serves to bring them together in a manner that demonstrates their close and interrelated nature. Just as importantly, this occurs in a way that demonstrates the close relationship between the problem of harm and the ethical and evaluative stance that is held in the discipline of International Studies, as well as the social sciences more broadly.

Let us consider the threefold problematic in more detail. The first of the three problems concerns *object adequacy*, or understanding what it means to 'get things right' in the study of a social object. This is grounded in the tension that we have seen over the ability to give an account of the problem of harm that is able to ground its engagement with the evaluative aspects of IS upon an account that is considered more scientifically or objectively adequate than others. Such a principle can be seen at play in the development of theories that attempted to incorporate objects that 'fell through' the cracks of state-centric theories such as realism. If, as we have noted, our ability to explain what harm is or might become depends on

[44] Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"'.

our ability to explain its social situation and history, then our understanding of how social scientific explanation operates with regard to its object needs to be considered.

The second of these concerns the *critical value* of social scientific accounts concerning the problem of harm. In many regards, the practical orientation of the discipline toward the wider social world of which it is a part forms a common thread that unites seemingly disparate views and theories. However, the socially and historically placed nature of scholarly enquiry demonstrates the necessity of accounting for the position from which such enquiry speaks. This is rendered more complex due to the differences between the social sciences and the detachment that characterises natural science; it is therefore necessary to consider what kind of relationship best suits the attempts of International Studies to engage with harm and its potential consequences.

Finally, the *problem of reflexivity* is characterised by the inexhaustibility of the problem of harm and the way in which it changes. If, have we have argued, the problem of harm is characterised – as any other social dynamic – by a myriad conjunction of power relations and forms of knowledge, then it requires an understanding of how the discipline should deal with change, reification and implicit bias in the accounts provided. In the context of the problem of harm, this is exacerbated by the responsibility taken on by the social scientist in accounting for particular types of harm despite their own, perhaps unacknowledged, limitations in knowledge and judgement. This aspect of the threefold problematic thus necessitates a consideration of the particular demands that the problem of harm places on the conduct of social science more broadly.

Taken together, these aspects of the problem of harm suggest the possibility of a systematic engagement with the problems that Critical Theory raises. In the context of IS, this might help us clarify the potential held out by the discipline's consistent fascination with the problem of harm. The intention is to put forward the approach and characteristic forms of thought developed by the critical theorists such that the contribution made by Linklater's sociology of harm conventions can be better understood and developed in the context of the wider discipline. As such, we can pose the research question:

> **What implications does Critical Theory have for the interrogation of the problem of harm in International Studies?**

The key point is that the problem of harm, understood as a consistent social tension and addressed regularly in the context of International Studies, is a key aspect of how theory in the discipline understands its social activity and position. In a world that seems to shift and outpace our inherited understandings of harm, clarification of this area of concern can contribute to the self-understanding of the discipline, open up possibilities for critical intervention and potential contributions toward the broader social tension that we have described. Throughout this thesis, *the problem of harm* will refer to this understanding, while *harm* will refer to its conceptual content or definition. In this spirit, while Linklater has advanced our understanding of the study of harm and what it requires, it may be the case that further interrogation of harm along the lines put forward in Critical Theory holds out an improved understanding of its importance and key dynamics. This exercise thus rests on the relationship between the knowledge produced in IS, its critical value, and how we understand its operation.

Thesis Structure and Arguments by Chapter

In addressing the various implications that Critical Theory has for the way the problem of harm can be understood in International Studies, this thesis will proceed in five main chapters. This will begin with an assessment of the way in which developments in the discipline have sought to embrace the problem of harm and respond to its demands. As an exhaustive survey is not possible in the scope of this thesis, focus will be placed on key transitions and debates in the discipline and interpreting them with regard to the problem of harm and its implications.

While the initial impulse for the discipline as such can be found in the wake of the First World War, historical developments have led to a concomitant broadening of the scope of International Studies, inclusive of issues that have arisen with technological development as well as those that existed before but were not recognised or prioritised in disciplinary discourse. These include changes such as the inclusion of marginalised groups in postcolonial and gender Theory, the broadening of the object of concern in human security and green theory, and the recognition epistemic violence as a problem in critical theory. Nonetheless, and despite differences in particular cases, a persistent thread can be found in the call to practical involvement centred on the problem of harm. This common thread rests on three strategies of contention that illustrate the various ways in which the problem of harm is raised

in disciplinary debates, and concerns issues of scientific correctness, the normative position of various perspectives, and their ability to account for their own limitations and biases. However, we argue that Critical Theory presents a more holistic attitude toward the problems that harm raises for IS that provokes important questions regarding the sociology of such knowledge and the identification of avenues through which social change can be brought about. In examining authors such as Ashley, Cox and Linklater, we argue that their approach to the problem of harm was characterised less by particular arguments than it was by an insistence on the interconnected way in which harm poses a problem for the production of knowledge in the discipline. Rather than three strategies of contention, then, Critical Theory allows us to characterise the relationship between IS and the problem of harm as a single problem field centred on a three aspects – the problems of object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity – that we understand as the *threefold problematic* underpinning the role that harm plays in disciplinary debate. In this light, we suggest that a deeper engagement with the problem of harm requires us to engage with the threefold problematic and its interconnections, and that this is best served by an engagement with its historical antecedents in the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. In developing this engagement, we might better understand the potentially widespread implications that Critical Theory holds for the way that IS understands the problem of harm.

The role that Critical Theory plays in how harm is understood in the discipline leads us to investigate its way of approaching harm through the work of its key thinkers, beyond its specific application in IS. The second chapter suggests that while various broad arguments from Critical Theory have been taken on board in the context of the discipline, an understudied aspect of this contribution concerns the close relationship that major figures within the movement saw between the problem of harm and the ethical possibilities held out by academic enquiry. Driven by their experience of the horrors of the early twentieth century, they argued that the social experience of harm can be understood as placing considerable weight on the construction of theory as a historical exercise that is responsive to the requirements of critique. For Adorno and Horkheimer in particular, this point was raised by the juxtaposition between subject and object, man and nature, which characterised the human condition and ensured that suffering was an essential aspect of life under conditions of contemporary capitalism. The chapter examines the way in which this necessitated a normatively-motivated form of radical critique through which Adorno attempted to demonstrate the way in which theoretical concepts and systems would necessarily fall short

of the essential problems posed by suffering in society. Adorno went on to argue that through a practice of constant negative reflection, it may be possible to mitigate the gulf between subject and object in a historically-limited and partial fashion. When we engage in a process of critique, therefore, we are involved in addressing a fundamental problem that reveals the problem of harm as one of the guiding principles of critical social thought. Later articulations of the critical project attempted to ground the possibility of addressing the problem of harm through an engagement with the emancipatory potential maintained in the capacity for communication. However, the restrictions of this approach and persistent critiques of it demonstrates the necessity of a greater focus on the potential of the social sciences if the problem of harm is to be addressed rigorously. We conclude by putting forward the particular constellation through which Critical Theory allows us to understand the problem of harm and some of its key dynamics. Having understood these relationships, we can proceed to address the work of Linklater – whose work on harm attempts to address it directly – with a view to seeing how his engagement with the problem of harm operates in light of the contribution made by Critical Theory.

The third chapter addresses Linklater's historical sociology as an attempt to formulate a sociological examination of the problem of harm that can operate as a point of synthesis for the wider discipline of International Studies. Having investigated the background for such a project, we can understand the sociology of harm conventions as potentially offering a way to move beyond the dichotomy between the Critical Theory's overwhelming normative impulse and the social scientific task of explaining the problem of harm in social life; in doing so, it offers an approach to the threefold problematic that does not overemphasise any one of its aspects. Linklater's aim, to provide a historical sociology that can inform understandings of harm and the way in which they are historically situated, explicitly suggests that an engagement with empirical work does not necessarily operate to the detriment of normative concern.[45] However, a close engagement with his work demonstrates that this sociology is predicated on a particular ontology that restricts the critical claims that it is possible to derive from empirical knowledge. Using the example of structural harm as a limit case for the theory, it becomes evident that while the figurational account holds great potential for describing the development of intersubjective understandings, it does not fully account for the problematic relationship between social science and its object that is a key issue raised by Critical Theory. The way that figurational sociology conceptualises the production of

[45] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 23.

knowledge knowledge thus lacks a clear account of how we might engage in critical scholarship in the discipline. Arguing for the necessity of an account of this relationship, we propose a reconstruction of the sociology of harm conventions that more clearly relates to the implications of the threefold problematic in the context of International Studies.

The fourth chapter undertakes this reconstructive effort through an engagement with the philosophy of science, and particularly Critical Realism, in order to ask what the formulation of an object-adequate account of the problem of harm might look like. Having made significant inroads in International Studies, Critical Realists propose to conduct a metatheoretical analysis of the conditions that make social scientific activity possible, and argue that this can best be understood through the concepts of emergence and stratification. Based on this development, we argue that the sociology of harm conventions can be bolstered if we find a way to link the problems of critical value and object adequacy with regard to the problem of harm. By addressing these questions directly, it becomes possible for us to put forward an account of the way in which subjects confront history as objective. This argument, in turn, is based on an account of how social structure becomes an object of knowledge for social science, thus formulating a viable alternative to Linklater's Eliasian account of scientific knowledge formation. The relationship between object-adequacy and critical value is demonstrated through the idea of *explanatory critique*, a process which describes the value that social science derives from negotiating the subject/object divide. This constitutes a move to relate the implications of the problem of harm, as put forward through Critical Theory, directly to the practice of social science, and in doing so, allows us to better characterise the normative contribution that the sociology of harm conventions can make. However, this framework does not fully address the problem of reflexivity – the third aspect raised by the threefold problematic. Bringing this issue to the fore thus remains a key challenge if we are to fully address the implications of the problem of harm, particularly given the close association between Critical Theory and reflexivity in International Studies.

The final chapter concludes our investigation by examining the reconstruction put forward in the previous with regard to two points – the problem of reflexivity, and the relationship that this holds to the social and historically delimited nature of attempts at social science. In doing so, it clarifies the way that Critical Theory serves as an *agent provocateur* in the discipline by first highlighting various perspectives' commitment to the problem of harm before insisting on the irreducibility of this commitment. It argues that an understanding of the objective historical situation of International Studies demonstrates various possibilities

and limitations upon its activity, drawn from our understanding of the discipline contextualised against the problem of harm. Having predicated the possibility of critique upon the social scientific explanation of forms of harm and suffering, we consider the Critical Realist approach in light of the dangers of reification that were a key concern for Critical Theory. The chapter argues that the interrogation of the subject/object divide is a key aspect of the way that Critical Theory can help IS negotiate the problem of harm, and that the sociological aspect of this is best served by the approach we derived from Critical Realism. In this context, we can situate the task of Critical Theory to be the mediation of this relationship with the intention of *chastening* the knowledge produced by social scientific enquiry. This is understood as a complex endeavour that seeks to render the objective grounds for social change intelligible and demonstrating the historical limits of these conceptions. It is not merely that Critical Theory makes a particular positive contribution to practical knowledge, or that it is purely concerned with negation, but that it is fundamentally concerned with *both* when understood in relation to the problem of harm and the priority it accords to suffering. Indeed, it is precisely the nature of this contradiction that places Critical Theory in such a vital and pressing position – to mediate between theoretical understandings, interrogate the subject/object divide and provide insight into possibilities for social transformation.

In closing, it is worth noting the manner in which the thesis contributes to the broader academic literature. In the first instance, it follows the work of Linklater and attempts to develop the sociology of harm conventions, understanding his work to be both normatively important and incredibly ambitious – although not beyond a process of critique, refinement and clarification. In this light, the contribution of the thesis is to broaden and clarify the potential impact of sociohistorical investigations into the problem of harm.

There are some other areas in which the reflections here are likely to be more useful than others. Foremost among these is the literature on Critical International Studies and its related theories, to which it contributes both an understanding of the way in which normative commitments are vital to theory construction, as well as a philosophically realist understanding of how they can support the impulse toward critique. In this regard, it offers an original reading of the problem of harm that attempts to bridge the recent sociological work of Linklater with critical work in the discipline.

Secondly, the interpretation of the Frankfurt School put forward here is intended as a way of furthering the critical reassessment of Adorno that is currently taking place in International Studies.[46]

Thirdly, it is intended that the continuing and fruitful debate on the philosophy of science within International Studies can benefit from its reflection on the role of epistemological reflection with regard to such a realist understanding. In this regard, the thesis brings together the Frankfurt School and Critical Realism as important forms of enquiry for those who think about the historical situation of attempts at social science, and furthers the debate over pragmatism, realism and ethics in the philosophy of science.[47]

Finally, in embracing the question of how we live with others while minimising the harm we do to them, this thesis is concerned with the perennial critical-theoretical question – that of the reasonable conditions of life.[48] It thus makes a contribution to the development of Critical Theory more generally, particularly in regard to understanding how the social conditions that ground our attempts at theoretical reflection impact upon our understanding of ethical and normative proscription beyond the debate over objective truth content. That Critical Theory persisted in its reflections based on an avowedly ethical commitment to the amelioration of suffering, and was willing to reflexively critique itself in light of the manner in which this needed to be justified is, I think, an admirable tendency; certainly one that bears continued reflection as we proceed towards barbarism as quickly as we do emancipation.

[46] Tom Houseman, 'Auschwitz as Eschaton: Adorno's Negative Rewriting of the Messianic in Critical Theory', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 42, no. 1 (1 September 2013): 155–76. Kai Jonas Koddenbrock, 'Strategies of Critique in International Relations: From Foucault and Latour towards Marx', *European Journal of International Relations* (2014). Matthew Fluck, 'The Best There Is? Communication, Objectivity and the Future of Critical International Relations Theory', *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 1 (1 March 2014): 56–79.

[47] In particular, the work of the '5%' group. Hidemi Suganami, 'Narrative Explanation and International Relations: Back to Basics', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 2 (12 January 2008): 327–56. A. R. C. Humphreys, 'Applying Jackson's Methodological Ideal-Types: Problems of Differentiation and Classification', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 41, no. 2 (1 January 2013): 290–308. Jackson, 'Must International Studies Be a Science?' Milja Kurki, 'Stretching Situated Knowledge: From Standpoint Epistemology to Cosmology and Back Again', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 43, no. 3 (1 June 2015): 779–97.

[48] Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory; Selected Essays* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 98–99.

Chapter 1 – The Problem of Harm in International Studies: Five theoretical Transitions

Introduction

While enquiry in International Studies has focussed on different objects according to circumstance, the problem of the harm that we do to others seems to persist in different forms as a common feature of scholarly debate. This chapter engages in a reading of the discipline that highlights this concern and attempts to understand the role harm plays in a discipline whose object centres on 'encounters between difference across boundaries'.[49] In the context of continuous changes in technology and social life that have accompanied increasing levels of social interconnectedness, ethical reflection comes to be placed in an ambiguous position, reliant on ever-greater capacities for technical manipulation while being increasingly unable to understand the consequences of doing so and the harm that may result.[50] Our argument is that debates in the discipline have reflected on these processes, as well as engaging directly with each other, in a way that implicitly reflects upon the nature of harm.

When we pay attention to the problem of harm in the context of IS, we find a discipline that is persistent in reflecting on the ethical dimension of past, present and future enquiry. In this regard, key issues arise repeatedly and are rarely entirely pushed aside by new concerns. It remains the case that many undergraduate textbooks begin with the focus on war and the possibility of its mitigation that was the catalyst for disciplinary integration around the end of the First World War.[51] Indeed, in incorporating the study of war as well as debates concerning sexual violence, colonial expropriation or environmental degradation, IS

[49] Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, 'Must International Studies Be a Science?', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 43, no. 3 (1 June 2015).

[50] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 1–2. For two other influential examples from sociology, see Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Malden, MA: Polity, 1999), 109–32 and Zygmunt Bauman, *Society under Siege* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2002), 210–17.

[51] For examples, see Chris Brown, *Understanding International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 19. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theories*, 3rd edition (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2013), 1.

seems to operate as a broad church that addresses itself to many of the most pressing forms of harm humanity has yet encountered. Its function as a site for critical debate of these issues allows us to understand the discipline as constituting a forum through which the broader social tension that Linklater has termed the problem of harm is accounted for and negotiated.[52] By reflecting on this process, it may be possible to gain a clearer understanding of how IS is at least partly constituted by an implicit concern with harm, and the consequences this has for the way that enquiry is conducted in the discipline.

This approach does not lend itself to the evaluation of particular viewpoints, perspectives or theories, but is better served by examining the discipline and its conversations in motion. This allows us to better understand disciplinary engagement less as a series of statements and more as parts of a conversation that indicates the form that ethical engagement and debate takes in IS, illustrating the kind of claims that are made as to its significance. While an exhaustive survey of such claims is not possible here, we engage with five key theoretical issues as a way of examining the role that the problem of harm has played.[53] It is important to note that few, if any, of these transitions have resulted in a fully-fledged paradigm shift. Indeed, the early touchstones of International Studies, including Realism and Liberalism, remain key touchstones such that fragmentation likely to be the result of any novel theoretical endeavour.[54] The reasons given for this result may vary, but with regard to core theoretical understandings more often than not focus on the way in which the traditionally-defined 'key' actor of study for International Relations – the state – remains central to contemporary international politics despite the changing way in which theorists have characterised it.[55] However, many of the approaches that have been critical of the centrality of the state in IS have become legitimated to the extent that the discipline would seem curiously bereft without them. While attempts at gaining this legitimacy continue on the peripheries of the discipline, it would be difficult to formulate and undergraduate course that did not at least touch on the insights brought to the field by theories such as feminism, critical theory and postcolonial approaches. In this sense, examining IS as a discipline-in-

[52] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 112–53.

[53] Recent attempts to draw out a sociology of the discipline have demonstrated the utility of this approach with regard to the *kind* of debates had in International Studies. See Inanna Hamati-Ataya, 'Reflectivity, Reflexivity, Reflexivism: IR's "reflexive Turn" — and beyond', *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 4 (1 December 2013): 669–694.

[54] Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*, 107.

[55] For an influential example, see Ken Booth, 'Security and Self Reflections of a Fallen Realist'.

conversation, rather than providing a taxonomy of stated positions or paradigmatic orientations, is likely to give us a greater understanding of the role that the problem of harm plays in its development.

The debates discussed here are intended to give an insight into key debates that have influenced disciplinary development, allowing us to examine the role that the problem of harm has played within them such that we might appreciate its significance for the discipline more broadly. Their selection reflects the way in which they have contributed to the discipline in varying ways that centre on the problem of harm, and illustrates the different forms that disciplinary engagement takes when we understand harm as a key object of disciplinary concern.[56] These debates are:

- The debate between idealists and realists
- The development of critical theory
- The transition from state security to human security
- The incorporation of marginalised groups
- The developing concern with environmental issues

Once again, this is not an exhaustive survey, but is aimed at exploring the way in which theoretical transitions have been negotiated in the discipline in a way that highlights its distinct ethical qualities and which are centred on the problem of harm. While the current state of disciplinary pluralism is more than accepting of the idea that theoretical outlooks in conversation with each other are often talking about different objects, we will see that a continuous engagement with the problem of harm can be found in debates concerning how issues of ethical significance should be approached; a process which Linklater argues takes place in social life more broadly.[57] This holds out the possibility of understanding the problem of harm as a persistent point of contention in the discipline that continues despite the way in which the empirical objects of concern that IS is concerned with changes over time. Understanding what drives the problem-field of the discipline, and thus the practices of those that engage in it, therefore constitutes a way of understanding the implicit commitments of its practitioners rather than collecting together a set of distinct knowledge-claims.

[56] A similar survey has been conducted in Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 112–53. While some of the same points will be covered here, this chapter focusses primarily on the debate between perspectives, rather than the specific objects of inquiry covered by each. This is intended to highlight the forms of debate that take place with regard to the problem of harm that, we will argue, shows that such debates become centred on particular strategies of contention that inform the way in which knowledge is produced.
[57] Ibid., 23.

Idealists and Realists: A Founding Myth for International Studies

The pervasiveness of the idealist/realist debate before the Second World War is a principle around which introductory texts to International Studies often centre, despite debate over the historical accuracy of these accounts.[58] Historical basis aside, however, it is certainly the case that the pedagogical prevalence of such principles serves to portray the founding of contemporary political realism on a chastening of an 'immature' idealist tendency that was principally committed to internationalism, and thus a more 'mature' response to the reality of international politics on the grandest scale imaginable at the time.[59] The prevalence of this formulation tends toward the periodization of the discipline as a series of 'great debates', the integrative power of which have been central to the self-understanding of its practitioners as involved in a historically developing process of investigation. As an early example of such a debate, the disagreement between Idealists and Realists nonetheless rested on a shared commitment to *phronesis*, or the provision of practical wisdom that could inform practice in the international sphere.[60] However, the two perspectives differed in their guidance. In the terms of a later appraisal, Idealists were committed to the problem of justice in international affairs, while realists argued that the possibility of justice was only salient once the problem of order had been solved.[61] Despite a process of historical revision that has demonstrated many Idealists as closet Realists, and Realists to be just as often concerned with questions of justice and principle, the pedagogical primacy of this (potentially imagined) debate serves to highlight core problems, such as that posed by war and survival in the lack of an overarching

[58] Lucian M. Ashworth, 'Where Are the Idealists in Interwar International Relations?', *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 2006): 291–308.

[59] See for example Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations*, 3Rev Ed edition (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 6. A more qualified view, which nonetheless maintains the foundational basis of the Realist/Idealist debate, can be found in Dunne, Kurki, and Smith, *International Relations Theories*, 4. *The Globalization of World Politics* attempts to demonstrate the 'mythical' nature of the idealist/realist debate, but maintains the importance of such as an important identity-basis for the discipline at large. John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens, eds., *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 4th edition (New York: OUP Oxford, 2007), 92. Peter Wilson, 'E.H. Carr's The Twenty Years' Crisis: Appearance and Reality in World Politics', *Politik* 12, no. 4 (2009): 5.

[60] Bull notes that Carr, one of the thinkers most often subject to revisionism in International Studies, argued that political thought is a form of political action. Hedley Bull, 'The Twenty Years' Crisis Thirty Years On', *International Journal* 24, no. 4 (1 October 1969): 627. Moreover, Carr revealed the false assumptions that underpinned foreign policy decisions and which 'had to be cleared away if British Policy were to be based on a correct perception of what the world was like.' Ibid., 628.

[61] See Bull's chapter on order and justice in international politics. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Third (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 74.

hierarchy, as the historical 'first mover' of disciplinary formation. These problems, we argue, operate as practical issues that are raised by what we understand as the problem of harm; their formation *as problems* tells us something significant about the forms of international behaviour that were to be embraced or avoided due to the harm they might cause to citizens or states.

It is important to note the extent to which this early period of International Studies was characterised by a real or imagined proximity between the academic study of international politics and its practice.[62] Indeed, suggestions that realism remains close to the promotion of (normally American) hegemonic interests continue to be made today, particularly with regard to the potentially harmful consequences of superpower hubris for sovereign integrity and the protection of citizens.[63] Core to this pragmatic support for existing powers is the idea that realism can be understood as revealing a path to security that is shorn of its immature idealistic assumptions and focussed on the truth of the situation that pertains in the international state system. Such security, although articulated differently across contexts, is most often at root an analogue for 'survival' on some level, thus rendering international political life in terms of the potential harm to self that could stem from utopian misconduct. Realist arguments against post 9/11 American foreign policy can be seen in a similar light, attempting to reveal the manner in which America had lost sight of its objective national interest and was conflating these with the world interest in a manner that the early realists had criticised so heavily, thus potentially opening itself to severe blowback.[64] Such a strategy is one that involves the supposition of a basic reality that idealism misrepresented through a conflation of normative injunctions and the 'nature of things'. It is precisely this argument that is made by Gilpin, who suggests that power games in the context of anarchy are the basic reality of politics in the international realm.[65] In this regard, attempting to move

[62] Bull, 'The Twenty Years' Crisis Thirty Years On', 632.
[63] Campbell Craig, 'American Realism versus American Imperialism', *World Politics* 57, no. 1 (2004): 144.
[64] For Mearsheimer's analysis, see 'Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism versus Neo-Conservatism', *openDemocracy* This followed a 2002 advertisement in the New York Times signed by 33 realist scholars, Various, 'War With Iraq Is Not In America's National Interest', *New York Times*, 26 September 2002. A similar effort was undertaken with regard to Obama's continued involvement in Afghanistan Ben Smith, 'Realists Warn on Afghan War', *Politico*, 15 September 2009.
[65] Robert G. Gilpin, 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism', *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (March 1984): 290.

beyond such objective limitations can only be understood as hubris, and beckons in the tragic fate of an actor that goes beyond their means.[66]

The core imperative of the realist vision of international politics, that of finding a way to survive in a system with no institutional hierarchy, thus can be understood as an orientation toward the problem of harm that delineates an understanding of the real and epiphenomenal objects of social scientific enquiry. On this understanding, any real change is more likely to occur in a way that is not amenable to idealistic proscription or normative intent.[67] It remains the case that steering the state in a pragmatic and power-oriented fashion may serve to minimise the risk of harm to the state involved, and its citizens by corollary, but international politics should not be subject to normative interventions such as occurred with pacification at the domestic level. In arguing that the international sphere has unique properties that guide our approach to the problem of harm, normative debates such as those found in political theory are removed from consideration.[68] Rather, for each state there is a situational logic that guides national interest objectively, and an understanding of this is the best way of formulating a prudent foreign policy centred on state survival. While it may not be the object of enquiry as such, the manner in which survival is understood as the *sine qua non* of international politics flows directly into what is considered prudent or not and is an irreducible principle that overwhelms all other judgements. At the core of the foundational myth of IS as a discipline, we therefore find an irreducible ethical imperative that defines the object of study in a debate centred on the problem of harm.

The Idealist/Realist debate, we suggest, can be characterised by drawing on the sources of normative concern that each theory took to be at stake in the international system. The intervention of the political realists grew out of a concern with the potentially tragic effects that could follow from incorrect sources of knowledge concerning the international realm, an aesthetic approach that highlights the key concern of such theorists with unnecessary harm.[69] These early debates are instructive not just because of their content, but

[66] Daniel J. Levine, 'Why Hans Morgenthau Was Not a Critical Theorist (and Why Contemporary IR Realists Should Care)', *International Relations* 27, no. 1 (1 March 2013): 107.

[67] Gilpin reads Morgenthau as 'simply saying the following: if the nation-state is to disappear […] it will do so through age-old political processes and not as idealists would wish through a transcendence of politics itself.' Gilpin, 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism', 299.

[68] For a commentary on the domestic analogy, see Hidemi Suganami, 'Reflections on the Domestic Analogy: The Case of Bull, Beitz and Linklater', *Review of International Studies* 12, no. 2 (April 1986): 146.

[69] This approach continues to be reassessed and reappropriated in a way that highlights political realism as laden with consequences for how we understand political theory in an international context. See Toni Dr Erskine and

due to how they illustrate the way in which the discipline has located areas of core concern around which further debates are constructed and carried out. In this case, we can see that the blurring of the objective and normative claims that are encoded in the imperative toward survival and prudent conduct can be understood as an attempt to solidify disciplinary norms in light of the 'true' nature of international politics, and as a way to prevent the problematic importing of foreign or inappropriately normative ideas into the international realm. The consequence of such a strategy is to define a particular dimension of international life as irreducible – states in the context of anarchy – which serves to delimit and define the boundaries within which the problem of harm can be addressed. Crucially, this arises from a claim to objectivity, but is prompted by an initial normative injunction that solidifies the state as the key source of concern with regard to the problem of harm.

Problem Solving and Critical Theory

Contrary to the received wisdom that dominated the early period of International Studies, the development of Critical Theory sought to highlight the way in which many areas of activity in the discipline could be understood as offering a legitimation of unquestioned assumptions such as those that the realist victory had embedded in the structure of disciplinary enquiry.[70] The fact that these assumptions, in being rendered timeless and permanent, could serve as rationalisations for prudential violence in the practice of international politics ensured that IS, rather than being concerned primarily with isolated reflection, could be implicated in supporting violent or harmful practices. Cox's Gramscian dictum, that 'Theory is always for someone and for some purpose' can be understood as a paradigmatic reflection on the manner in which theoretical work are capable of being used in an instrumental fashion with the possibility of harmful consequences. [71] Rather than purely objective descriptions or explanations, the *purposive* nature of social scientific accounts highlighted their susceptibility to prevailing power relations and socially-embedded nature. Contemporaneously with this, other Marxian-inspired approaches such as those of Linklater and Ashley sought to reflect upon the presuppositions of universal knowledge and its basis in

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Richard Ned LeBow, eds., *Tragedy and International Relations* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Schol, Print UK, 2012).

[70] For a survey, see Andrew Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory', in *Critical Theory and World Politics* (Routledge, 2007).

[71] Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 10 (1981): 128.

particular understandings of history and development.[72] Introducing the heritage of Critical Theory, and particularly the work of Jurgen Habermas, to International Studies, they demonstrated the restrictive model upon which knowledge in the discipline was based, thus problematizing traditional categories and demonstrating the need for normative reflection on theoretical assumptions.

Ashley's deployment of Habermasian categories allowed him to draw a line between the increasingly technical and manipulationist view taken by structural realism and the practical wisdom that was the key lesson of its classical predecessor.[73] As such, structural realism disguised a partial understanding of the nature of international politics in forms that pretended toward universality, claiming prestige through an understanding of such work as scientific and running against the more practical claims of realism's key founder in the discipline, Hans Morgenthau.[74] Such claims at objective knowledge, Ashley argued, necessitated an equally proactive engagement with the social situation of that knowledge and the problem-field from which it had arisen.[75] It is only in this context that one can acknowledge the role of particular forms of knowledge as complicit in various political projects, just as revaluations of the Marxist tradition had served to highlight the totalitarian tendencies of structuralist thought.[76] It was the task of critical thought in the discipline to open up spaces for thought such that it was possible to move beyond closed concepts that had served to 'paper over the cracks' and hide instances of harm and violence that operated through the exclusion of the least-powerful in society from dominant discourse.

Critical Theory's demonstration of the social underpinnings of knowledge production further served to historicise many of the concepts that International Studies had traditionally relied upon.[77] The realist prioritisation of the 'facts of the matter' thus falls subject to the claim that such an ahistorical focus does not take account of the transitory nature of many of the forms of political order. On a grand scale, political institutions such as the state or sovereignty are not the first forms of political community, and it appears that they will not be

[72] Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens* (London: Palgrave Schol, Print UK, 1982). Richard K. Ashley, 'The Poverty of Neorealism', *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (March 1984): 225–286.
[73] Richard K. Ashley, 'Political Realism and Human Interests', *International Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1981): 227.
[74] Ibid., 280.
[75] Ibid., 282.
[76] Andrew Linklater, *Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 47–48.
[77] Ashley, 'The Poverty of Neorealism', 207.

the last. Critical Theory therefore drives toward an understanding that maintains the openness of possible futures, attempting to ground such ideas on the objective basis of immanent potentials for change.[78] Furthermore, the fact of socially situated knowledge is as true for the theorist as it is for the statesman due to the way in which the academy is by necessity part of its object of study.[79] The drive to produce knowledge within the discipline therefore should be subject to critique and reflection in a manner which reflects the potential for bias in its understanding of its potential contributions. In later work of Linklater's, this critical dialogue would be reformulated as the basis for a universal communication community that was able to reconcile itself to difference, taking further prompts from Habermas' formulation of a discourse ethics on the basis of knowledge-constitutive interests.[80] Importantly, this moved beyond the limitations of the critical framework posed by Marxism to include forms of unjustified exclusion beyond that of class, such as that of gender or race that had previously been marginalised in processes of ethical consideration.[81]

The culmination of these efforts was to render the production of knowledge as partial and historically delimited. Further developments of this idea in social science, based on the sociology or philosophy of knowledge, have pushed this line of argument further, but most rest on the fundamental idea of epistemic violence through the production of knowledge within power structures, and often link this to consequences for practice.[82] In doing so, they provided the conditions for accounts that have put forward the restrictive consequences of dominant theories in more particular terms, some of which will be discussed below. In Cox's terminology, this serves to highlight the critical, and not merely problem solving, possibilities inherent in the discipline through which it is able to become more responsive to the world and provide more adequate and inclusive accounts.[83] Contrary to the problem solving approach which seeks to take things as they are along the lines of disciplinary subdivision, one of the benefits of critical approaches is that they attempt to grasp larger synthetic pictures which take the possibility of change as their starting point. As such, they are inclusive of a process

[78] Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', 130.
[79] Richard K. Ashley, 'Political Realism and Human Interests', 207.
[80] Linklater, *Transformation of Political Community*.
[81] Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory'.
[82] These are too numerous to mention here, but particularly of note for International Studies are poststructuralist theories that are derived from the work of Foucault, Lacan and Derrida. See Jenny Edkins, Nalini Persram, and Véronique Pin-Fat, *Sovereignty and Subjectivity*, Critical Perspectives on World Politics (Boulder ; London: LRienner, 1999). James Der Derian, *Critical Practices in International Theory : Selected Essays* (Routledge, 2009), 205. RBJ Walker, *After the Globe, before the World* (Routledge, 2010), 216–17.
[83] Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', 128.

of ethical reasoning and are open to participating in debates concerning the problem of harm. The starting point for such a theoretical endeavour should be more than the received concepts and theoretical apparatuses of the discipline, but include the changing tides and development of history itself.[84]

The introduction of Critical Theory to IS can be understood, on our reading, as opening up space for ethical reflexivity and change in an environment that had previously formulated its relationship to the problem of harm on the discovery of fundamental truths. It therefore served as a basis for later work that would open up the field to other areas of relevance to international politics which had previously been foreclosed by the political realist commitment to state survival as the fundamental object of disciplinary concern. While the tendency of political realism toward tragic narratives demonstrated the ethical starting point of such theoretical endeavours in an aesthetic vision, critical theory attempted to demonstrate that the self-pity of such narratives belied the failure of changes to the international system that were not the wishes of deluded idealists, but objectively possible.[85] In such a context, it falls to theory to interrogate such possibilities in a way that recalls the central ethical imperative of International Studies; not merely a question of *what* we study, but *why* we study at all and what the social role of academic enquiry should be. While hopes for the change of international relations at large have varied by theory or theorist, critical theories have argued that it is the promise that we might transcend existing conditions, regardless of its success, that lies at the centre of social science.[86] That the problem of harm presented the discipline with possibilities, and not merely problems, is a theme that we shall return to in the next chapter. However, in the current context we will now see how this philosophical basis provided further impetus to developments in the discipline that altered the way we think about harm in particular situations and circumstances.

From State Security to Human Security

The Cold War, being the ground in which International Studies 'grew up', provided a context in which 'weapons provided most of the questions, and they provided most of the

[84] Ibid., 129.
[85] The recent resurgence of classical realism, as opposed to its 'neo' or structural variant, has placed the theme of tragedy once again in the sights of International Studies. For a recent collection, see Erskine and LeBow, *Tragedy and International Relations*.
[86] Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, New Edition (Polity Press, 1986), 312–13.

answers'.[87] A key transition arrived at the end of the Cold War; developing on Buzan's sectoral approach to security in *People, States and Fear*, Booth argued that the key security challenges facing populations were now as likely to emerge from the economy, crime or disease as they were to arise from the actions of states, and that it any case the state might not guarantee the safety of its citizens.[88] In many ways, Booth's argument was grounded upon the realist attitude towards the 'facts of the matter', but argued for the inclusion of new objects of study in accordance with historical change. On this understanding, it is not the case that states have lost their import as a unit of analysis in the discipline, as they clearly remains salient. However, novel threats arising due to historical development or their recent recognition undermined the adequacy of 'our' words, concepts and the priority they were accorded in disciplinary discourse.[89] The development of a new understanding of international politics that was more adequate to explaining the relationship between security and the various threats that pertained in a post-Cold War globalised world became a top priority when faced with these problems, allowing the discipline to better understand what was at stake in the historical changes it was witness to.

Such a development was part of a broader movement toward demonstrating that traditional theories of security were tied to dominant state-based discourses of security.[90] As we have noted above, it is not uncommon for even the most traditional theories to contend the objectivity of the dominant view of how states should act. However, Booth contended that in allying their discourse to the actions of the US during the Cold War, political realism and its offshoot strategic studies had lost sight of what the principle of security had set out to do in the first place. In effect proposing the question of who security was *for*, he put forward security as an instrumental good that allowed theory to acknowledge the close ties between security and the emancipatory goal at its centre, thus proposing – under other terms – a refocussing of the problem of harm in order to place key values on the lives of people, rather than states.[91] In this regard, the disparity between security-as-emancipation and state security is clear; it is entirely possible to have a secure state and an insecure population, thus rendering the former useless or nominal at best, and part of the problem at worst. In light of changed historical circumstances, the theorist has a responsibility to speak truth to power,

[87] Ken Booth, 'Security and Emancipation', *Review of International Studies* 17, no. 4 (1 October 1991): 316.
[88] Ibid., 318.
[89] Ibid., 313.
[90] Booth, 'Security and Self Reflections of a Fallen Realist', 9.
[91] The normative thrust of Booth's argument is clear in the statement that 'Emancipation, theoretically, is security.' Booth, 'Security and Emancipation', 319.

which in this case takes the form of reminding the state of its instrumental purpose and the goal at which it is aimed. This practice of critique served to revive the debate over the different ways that the problem of harm was manifested in international life, in opposition to the way that strategic studies had sought to limit possible areas of normative concern.

Booth's move toward human security can be seen as one aspect of a broader debate that resulted in the development of critical security studies following the end of the Cold War.[92] Such a debate has considerably broadened the object of study for scholars along the lines of Buzan's sectoral approach, but has also deepened it to include referent objects that were imperceptible within the frameworks of International Studies that were laid as convention in the early days of the discipline.[93] While it may be the case that security studies, as a bastion of knowledge oriented toward pragmatism and *phronesis* was one of the later areas of International Studies to undertake a 'critical' turn, it is precisely this practical element that renders it interesting sociologically.[94] In this case, it was precisely the *failure* of the discipline to address the problem of harm beyond a particular and limited Cold-War perspective that was the provocation for theoretical revision. While there is a significant extent to which the changes in security studies were concerned with how to describe the particular circumstances that would make a person 'secure' – the world had moved beyond the words designed for it – it was also the case that the more general question of what security studies was aimed at achieving came under significant scrutiny.[95]

It is these early moves that laid the groundwork for the area of security studies to expand into the many and diverse areas that it is currently concerned with. As in many other areas of the discipline, fragmentation has followed, with it now being commonplace to understand security studies as being concerned with various *securities* rather than security *per se* as it was applied to a unified and homogenous model of what a state is or what it is capable of.[96] In this regard, the proliferation of forms of security has served to diversify the possible units of concern beyond the specificity of the state, requiring a process of evaluative

[92] Booth, 'Security and Self Reflections of a Fallen Realist', 15.
[93] For a seminal survey, see Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, *Critical Security Studies: Concepts And Strategies*, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 1997).
[94] Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, 'Preface: Towards Critical Security Studies', in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (Routledge, 1997), vii.
[95] Ibid., ix.
[96] This can be understood as beginning with Buzan's *People, States and Fear* as the point at which the concept of security was to be separated from its synonymous relationship with power in realist understandings of global order. Barry Buzan, *People, States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd Edition (ECPR Press, 2007).

judgement that we understand as taking part in debates concerning the problem of harm. Indeed, more recent work has attacked the concept of security itself on the basis that it is directly linked to an ideology of stasis or reification that seeks priority by definition and fails to adapt to the changing world of which it is a part.[97] Despite the varied arenas in which such debates now occur, the consequences are often familiar from our understanding of Booth's work; thinking about security and international politics more broadly should pay great attention to the manner in which the world, and thus the object of study, are subject to change. With regard to the problem of harm and the way in which it has changed historically, the development of Critical Security Studies demonstrates an example of how IS goes about re-evaluating received understandings of what international politics and security consists of, thus restoring the ethical centrality of scholarly enquiry in the discipline.

The Incorporation of Marginalised Groups

One of the longer term impacts of the critique of state-centrism in International studies has been the incorporation of marginalised groups as legitimate objects of concern in the discipline.[98] In particular, gender studies and postcolonial studies have sought to demonstrate the importance of their respective objects of study in the operation of international relations generally. This runs counter to the dominant voices that are heard in accounts of international relations, often white and male, which serves to reify dominant assumptions about what politics in the international sphere is and should be. The key questions of the discipline, particularly the problems of global order, of war and power, are often based on particular claims concerning what it is to be powerful or successful in international politics and are predicated on a particular cultural and historical understanding of the function of the world system.[99] As such, the inclusion of different voices into the discipline serves to destabilise these dominant meanings and clarify systematic patterns of exclusion that allow harmful practices to go unnoticed.

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[97] Carolin Kaltofen, 'Engaging Adorno: Critical Security Studies after Emancipation', *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 1 (1 February 2013): 41.

[98] The ongoing normalisation of this inclusion is one reason for abandoning the use of the term 'International Relations' in this introduction, and the adoption of the term 'International Studies'. The contemporary state of the discipline is such that the relations between nations – as implied by the original term – is no longer an adequately descriptive designation. Rather, International Studies seeks to clarify, examine and render intelligible the 'encounter of difference across boundaries', as noted earlier.

[99] Mark B. Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London ; Sterling, Va: Pluto Press, 2002).

These arguments take two forms of importance for our argument. Firstly, they serve to demonstrate the manner in which women, children, indigenous groups and colonised peoples often bear the unacknowledged weight of war, production and sovereignty. In this arena, gender studies has highlighted the disproportionate vulnerability of women and children as 'collateral damage' in war, while postcolonial studies has involved itself in studies of the elimination and oppression of indigenous culture and consequences of patterns of global accumulation.[100] This serves to expand our understandings of harm from standard measurements, such as war deaths, to include other forms of violence including rape, systematic killing of civilians and destruction of cultural heritage. Beyond the immediately negative consequences of international politics, such as war, such approaches have further attempted to highlight the problematic reification of political institutions and the violence that is a consequence of this. Against ideas of the miraculous coming-into-being of states, postcolonial theory has reformulated the forging of territories and borders as efforts that involved considerable violence to indigenous populations, as in the case of American expansion.[101] Similarly, feminists have demonstrated the masculine qualities associated with the liberal public sphere.[102] In such cases, it is not merely that International Studies has ignored forms of harm throughout its history, but that these forms of harm are a consequence of precisely those institutions that are its object of study.[103]

The second of these arguments follows on from this, and suggests that there are forms of violence that are constitutive of the international system more broadly. In arguments that are structurally similar to the Marxist claim concerning the foundational necessity of a proletarian class, gender scholars have highlighted the double-working day of women, and postcolonial/decolonial scholars have demonstrated colonial expansion to be key to our understandings of the international system.[104] These are not mere externalities or unforeseen consequences, but are foundational to global political processes as such; Enloe has

[100] Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations : An Introduction* (Oxford: Polity, 1998), 100. Aime Cesaire, 'From Discourse on Colonialism', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (Longman, 1993), 177.
[101] David Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial : Rethinking North-South Relations* (Malden, Mass; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 35–36.
[102] Mary Ann Tétreault, 'Frontier Politics: Sex, Gender, and the Deconstruction of the Public Sphere', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 26, no. 1 (1 January 2001): 53–72.
[103] J. Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era* (Columbia University Press, 2001), 47–49.
[104] With regard to gender, Ibid., 85. Shilliam's rewriting of histories from a decolonial perspective serve to highlight the link between colonialism and European moral sensibilities. For example, Robbie Shilliam, 'Forget English Freedom, Remember Atlantic Slavery: Common Law, Commercial Law, and the Significance of Slavery for Classical Political Economy', *New Political Economy* 17, no. 5 (2012).

demonstrated the varied industries that are constitutive of military deployment and highlight the gendered labour that supports traditional images of war or intervention.[105] These debates demonstrate the foundational violence that is at the core of the lofty goals of 'high' politics and force us to reconsider the conceptions of political community that we take for granted such that the core concepts of political theory and International Studies become reformulated in a more diverse and complex fashion.

In general, the differentiation of masculine and feminine in gender theory, and the broader self/other distinction that postcolonial theory has also contributed to theoretically, have been developed into theories that demonstrate the way in which social relations are defined by pairs of binary opposites, and the way that this impact upon the wider social form. These critiques have considered the way in which this difference is not merely taxonomic, but constitutes the very form of the social relation itself.[106] Such relationships in feminist theory are seen as attributing gendered characteristics in order to justify their oppressive nature, demonstrating gender as a social framing device that serves as a common foundation of knowledge and which allows hierarchical justifications to be made.[107] These binary distinctions lead to a tendency to marginalise feminine categories on the basis of masculine tendencies toward hierarchy and categorisation. Rejecting this frame would not only consist of opposing the dominance of patriarchy, but of rejecting and overcoming the binary distinction itself as a general form under which harmful practices are legitimised or ignored.

While the starting point of gender theory is often the unseen 50% within society, postcolonial theory has put forward hidden histories that expand this strategy to include the constitutive violence that allowed Western societies to become dominant in the world system, including slavery and expropriation. Moreover, they serve to highlight the long histories of racism and binary opposition that are constitutive of modern forms of political community, including ideas of sovereignty and the state.[108] Such concepts are of course the foundation of the conceptual apparatus deployed by traditional forms of International Studies, and in this vein postcolonial study has made inroads into revealing the close ties between the academy

[105] Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, New edition edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
[106] This is subject to systematic consideration in Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, 1st Edition (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).
[107] Cecilia L. Ridgeway, 'Framed Before We Know It How Gender Shapes Social Relations', *Gender & Society* 23, no. 2 (4 January 2009): 147.
[108] See, for example Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

and the Western rationalist power/knowledge nexus.[109] Broadly speaking, the aim is to broaden conceptualisations such that it is possible to view postcolonial and indigenous societies less as 'deviant' or 'underdeveloped', but having a unique history of their own, a large amount of which is often subject to colonial occupation, slavery and genocide. This serves to bring back into view a historical process of domination that prevented proper consideration of the harm inflicted upon marginalised groups through processes of colonial expansion.

The slow incorporation of marginalised voices in the discipline has served to highlight the legitimating properties of many of the concepts used to explain international relations in the past. In addition, such concepts have restricted the ability of other groups to dissent or speak in the first place.[110] *In extremis*, such accounts have argued against the abstract rationalism that has characterised theoretical study of the international more broadly, proposing alternatives such as 'bottom up' ethnographic studies that begin from the subjects of concern.[111] In such a context, it is essential to maintain open concepts that are cognisant of difference and change, acknowledging the 'standpoint' implications of the social context of truth-claims.[112] In this regard, a focus on the problem of harm with regard to different groups serves to force the discipline open, ensuring that the concepts employed by the discipline remain open to input from the communities that are most vulnerable to its failings. The particular examples above, therefore, demonstrate that ideas of harm in society can operate with regard to sectional interests, legitimising the accounts that are put forward in their name and attempting to restore marginalised groups to their place in explanations of international life.

Green Theory: Decentring the Object of Harm

The development of Green theory has served to resituate the location of international politics at large, both decentring our understanding of the foundations of political action and

[109] See Edward Said, 'Secular Interpretation, the Geographical Element, and the Methodology of Imperialism', in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton University Press, 1995).
[110] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988).
[111] Christine Sylvester, *War as Experience : Contributions from International Relations and Feminist Analysis*, War, Politics and Experience (London: Routledge, 2013), 47.
[112] Sandra Harding, 'Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong Objectivity?"', *The Centennial Review* 36, no. 3 (1 October 1992): 65–66.

imposing significant weight on the timescales that theory attempts to account for. While earlier attempts at constructing an environmental view of world politics had been limited because of the tendency to externalise environmental problems, the inclusion of an ecological dimension has resulted in attempts to push beyond the 'statist frame' as a key object of concern, arguing that a more holistic view of the humanity's ecological situation is necessary.[113] Tracing a lineage from concerns over pesticides in the 1960s, through the limits to growth thesis, and onto contemporary concerns about climate change, the concerns of green theory have proven to be a consistent and sustained critique of the practices of modernity that go beyond visions of politics that prioritise the human as an isolated subject.[114] In doing so, it becomes possible for us to move beyond the distinction between man and nature, instead accounting for forms of harm that is based on an understanding of their relationship.

This concern for the sustainability of the natural environment often proceeds from a claim that their causal interconnection demonstrates the conventional separation of man from nature to be a fallacy, and that the social world is ultimately constituted by a high degree of interdependence between species and their ecological situation.[115] This is often argued as a critique of the enlightenment scientific attitude, epitomised by Francis Bacon, which places emphasis on the enlightenment as a promethean effort to overcome, and even conquer nature. The discourse of overcoming, and an implied separation from the chaotic realm of natural processes, hides the way in which those natural processes are constituted upon an exploitation of the natural world. In the realm of social theory, anthropocentric attitudes have led to a focus on the social world at the expense of our understanding of our location within the natural world, and lead us to ignore the destruction that is the consequence of modernist understandings of growth and development. Such an argument serves to group together understandings of development that rely on production in order to develop or improve the situation of different communities, including liberalism and Marxism. Contrary to environmentalism, which seeks to manage 'natural resources', ecological theorists locate the locus of social being in the natural world, thus forcing us to reconsider our notions of what harm is against this broader context. As such, while the debate over a viable alternative to

[113] Robyn Eckersley, 'Greening the Nation-State: From Exclusive to Inclusive Sovereignty', in *The State and the Global Ecological Crisis* (MIT Press, 2005), 159.
[114] Matthew Paterson, *Understanding Global Environmental Politics: Domination, Accumulation, Resistance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 50–51.
[115] Andrew Dobson, 'Critical Theory and Green Politics', in *The Politics of Nature: Explorations in Green Political Theory*, ed. Andrew Dobson and Paul Lucardie (London: Routledge, 1993), 190.

anthropocentrism still continues, it is clear that the ethical legacy of enlightenment humanism is inadequate due to its construal of individuals or groups as in some way autonomous from their broader situation.[116]

The implications of this thesis have led ecologists to formulate a ground for the extension of moral consideration, or even the granting of full subjecthood, to nature. This makes it possible to bring nature within moral and practical discourse and raises the possibility that nature can be harmed, as is evidenced by the attempt to develop new categories of harm such as ecocide.[117] Such arguments may extend as far as considering a concern for nature as an extended form of concern for the self.[118] The focus on interconnection and interpenetration over discrete subjects tends toward a holism that is highly critical of the Cartesian split between subject and object. Rather than being derived from the problem-solving mindset of instrumental viewpoints, interaction should be focussed on the complex interdependencies of the natural world. The moral justification for considering nature as a subject arises, as noted above, from what Eckersley terms the 'ecological model of internal relations', which attempts to erode the arbitrary and limiting intellectual barriers between humans and nature in moral discourse.[119] The shift to ecocentrism is elaborated through the justification of nature as having intrinsic value based on this complexity. This may either arise intrinsically through autopoiesis (self-reproduction/renewal) or through greater awareness of our interconnectedness and a transpersonal ecology based on this.[120] The result, a green theory of value, would challenge anthropocentric theories of value by extending the sphere of hierarchical value relations, which our ideas of harm depend on, to those things that were produced by non-human processes.

Ecological political theory has offered accounts of the structures that produce contemporary outcomes by demonstrating the logics inherent to various aspects of manmade

[116] Andrew Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, 3rd Edition. (Routledge, 2000), 38.
[117] 'Eradicating Ecocide – Supporting Ecocide Law', accessed 26 April 2016.
[118] This has been argued in various forms, and cannot be addressed here. Most efforts to locate humanity within nature tend towards including a degree of 'transpersonal identification' with nature, such that thinking about nature becomes a de-subjectified form of thought that is less susceptible to the pressures of instrumental reason. See Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, 49.
[119] Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism And Political Theory: Toward An Ecocentric Approach*, 1st Edition. (Routledge, 1992), 53.
[120] Ibid., 60. Eckersley also makes use of the ecofeminist argument for a form of transpersonal ecology based upon an inside-out identification with natural processes. For the sake of brevity, I conflate this here with the outside-in approach.

(second) nature. While these vary, they tend to centre on the areas of the state system, capitalism, knowledge production, and patriarchy as structures that preclude proper consideration of the forms of social/natural entanglement.[121] We can therefore read green theory as suggesting not merely that these can be changed in order to fit with green outcomes, but that expanding our ideas of the problem of harm allows us to understand the *intrinsically* harmful qualities that are essential to particular forms of social organisation. They therefore put forward the idea that harm is not merely an external byproduct of social processes, but that it can be *produced*. The orientation of disciplines such as IS should not, therefore, be toward producing explanations that attempt to aggregate together all marginalised voices, but to involve itself in the study of social depth that incorporates the constitutive elements of life itself. This social depth goes beyond a particular idea of the subject, but extends its conception of constitutive elements to a global, perhaps even cosmic, scale and describes social life in term of interconnection rather than as discrete units.[122] More importantly, it should acknowledge the time-horizon of its theoretical activity, acknowledging the degree to which scientific activity is engaged in negotiating unintended consequences in the context of a complex social organism that goes beyond our understanding. The problem of harm, which in IS has been focussed upon an enlightenment conceptualisation of human subjectivity, thus becomes decentred and subject to a broader set of natural processes that go beyond mainstream understandings of its extent and implications.

The Problem of Harm: Aspects of a Disciplinary Conversation

The debates above suggest that it is possible to understand the discipline of International Studies as being involved in a debate in which the problem of harm operates as a key source of contention. Theoretical arguments in this regard do not develop in isolation, but through critical or qualifying stances toward others that centre upon particular problem-fields. Moreover, they react to historical circumstance; we have seen theories prompted by

[121] This is the categorisation provided by Paterson in *Understanding Global Environmental Politics*. While the categories offered by authors vary in focus, most accounts of green politics include some variant of these themes, but expanded in particular directions as with eco-feminism, eco-Marxism etc. A harder 'core' focus of 'dark' green thought is to be found in the critique of instrumental reason, which often serves as the starting point for accounts of humankind's separation from nature. See Paterson, *Understanding Global Environmental Politics*, 40.

[122] For a sharp juxtaposition between liberal and green conceptions of this interconnection, see Piers Stephens, 'Green Liberalisms: Nature, Agency and the Good', in *Contemporary Environmental Politics: From Margins to Mainstream* (Routledge, 2009), 39.

the horror of war, the rebellion against gender discrimination or colonial rule, the equivalence between development and industrialisation, and the idealisation of science. Despite the specificities that come with particular engagements, however, we argue that each of these debates can be understood in a general sense as holding an ethical content that we identify with an orientation toward debates centred on what is or should be harmful. Once again, the aim here is not to identify the 'best' understanding of harm in the discipline, but to offer a reading of IS that describes how it is engaged in a social activity centred on the problem of harm and the consequences that follow from this.

From this viewpoint, we can see that the problem of harm has provoked various strategies of contention in the discipline in a way that highlights its importance in the way that International Studies has developed. These strategies are not mutually exclusive, but nonetheless allow us a qualitative understanding of the way that the ethical stance of the discipline is formulated and plays out in disciplinary debate.

The first of these strategies concerns the argument that a perspective has misrepresented or misunderstood some fundamental constituent of social or international life. This can be best characterised by the Realist insistence on anarchy as the 'basic reality' of international politics; in doing so, it becomes possible to render other issues epiphenomenal or insignificant. In the Realist case, this has had a significant impact on the orienting of the discipline toward state-centric concerns.[123] However, this does not just operate in the defence of traditionalism; in the case of Green Theory we saw the expansion of the domain of the international to areas that go far beyond issues of statecraft and diplomacy, and the incorporation of marginalised groups has also served to include the permissive conditions of the international as it is traditionally understood. This process of revision has served as much as an ethical indictment of previous perspectives as it has a purely scientific concern over the accuracy of our explanations. Indeed, if the Realist attempt to contribute to political judgement in the context of war as an archetypical form of harm is based on an incorrect account of the international system, then the judgemental and ethical consequences following from these accounts are also likely to be incorrect. Starting from the assumption that the

[123] Guzzini argues that the function of realism was to 'paper over' debates that lay at the core of International Studies more broadly Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*, 108. The relative power of various theories in this sense operates as much in a political fashion as it does through theories revealing a greater level of objective truth. See Lucian Ashworth, 'How Should We Study the History of International Thought?', *E-International Relations*, accessed 21 July 2015.

discipline is concerned with practical wisdom, as many do, we are therefore compelled to contest the adequacy of the explanations produced in the discipline as a way of better accounting for the problems we are interested in.[124]

The second of these strategies is focussed on the potential ethical consequences of particular accounts. In this context, Booth's development of human security is instructive; it was not necessarily the case that the state-centric model of security was wrong, but rather that it was inadequate to the true ethical call of the discipline, that of security/emancipation.[125] A reorientation of the discipline toward this approach allows us to see previous concerns in a new light and develop a fuller understanding of the possibilities that international life holds out. Similarly, we have seen gender theorists arguing that the impact of war can be better qualified if our accounts are situated in the context of gendered labour and exploitation. Invoking moral concern, therefore, can lead us to develop new approaches to the study of international politics which highlight its commitment to *phronesis* and possible contributions to practical action. It does so by forcing disciplinary engagement into an explicitly ethical register; in this form of contention, it is not just whether explanations are *correct* but whether they are *right* that is at stake. For marginalised groups in the discipline, such questions have focussed on the contribution it might make to the decolonising of public spaces and imaginations and the development of feminist strategy as normative and political goals.[126] In doing so, questions of judgement which may have become obscured are pushed to the forefront of disciplinary concern in a way that rests on a practical orientation to the possibilities that the problem of harm holds out.

The third strategy concerns calls for greater reflection upon the role and impact of the discipline as part of the broader social negotiation that the problem of harm constitutes. In this case Critical Theory provides the paradigmatic example of an approach which highlights the close relationship between power structures and the production of knowledge.[127] Numerous later authors have made this approach core to their strategy of engagement;

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[124] Chris Brown, 'The "Practice Turn", Phronesis and Classical Realism: Towards a Phronetic International Political Theory?', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 40, no. 3 (1 June 2012): 439–56.
[125] Booth, 'Security and Emancipation'.
[126] The 2016 conference at the Centre for African Studies, University of Edinburgh took the title 'Decolonising the Academy', reflecting a shift towards this aim. 'Centre of African Studies: Events: 2016 - Decolonizing the Academy', accessed 26 April 2016. Feminist strategy has been discussed by, among others, Sandra Harding in Sandra Harding, 'The Case For Strategic Realism: A Response To Lawson', *Feminist Economics* 5, no. 3 (1 January 1999): 127–33.
[127] Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory', 45.

Booth's argument for human security rested not only on Realism as inaccurately reflecting international life, but also on the necessity of adapting the discipline to historical change.[128] Contrary to understanding the work undertaken in the discipline as revealing something about the objects that we study, this strategy pushes us to understand explanations as grounded historically and reveals our previously unquestioned value assumptions and priorities. As such, it forces us to consider the discipline as part of a broader social and historical process that is unable to stand outside historical change; International Studies can contribute to the creation and recreation of harmful practices as much as it aims at ameliorating them. In Green and Gender Theory, we saw that a process of reflection upon what made international politics possible led us to a greater understanding of how state-centric explanations do not merely omit environmental or gendered concerns so much as they actively exclude them from consideration while relying on them implicitly. In doing so, arguments that focus on reflexivity rely less on contention centred on an external standard as much as they provoke existing approaches to better account for their own assumptions.

In highlighting these three strategies, we can see that debates in the discipline take on a variety of forms while still maintaining an ethical aspect that we identify as an engagement with the problem of harm. In doing so, debates concerning harm take place in different areas and at different levels of debate, arising in questions of scientific adequacy as much as it does the reflective and ethical debates of international political theory. To this extent, the discipline fulfils Linklater's understanding of the problem of harm as a social process of negotiation and contestation.[129] However, while this analysis allows us to understand the various ways in which the discipline has sought to engage with it, it does not provide us with an integrated understanding of the problems and opportunities presented by the idea of harm in International Studies. In this case, we have been able to identify various points at which the problem of harm has been a key issue of contention, but have not reached any conclusions as to how we might address it more fully. The discipline's orientation toward the problem of harm, therefore, may simply rest on an attempt to 'do better' in each of these three areas; more correct understandings of international politics, better normative standards, and a greater awareness of unquestioned assumptions.

However, among those perspectives examined above, Critical Theory attempts to move beyond such teleological understandings of disciplinary development and provokes us

[128] Booth, 'Security and Emancipation', 313.
[129] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 4.

to examine the problem of harm in more depth. It does so, we argue, by formulating the strategies of contention examined above less as a catalogue of different ways to debate the problem of harm, and more as an interconnected set of *problems* that are intrinsic to the way in which the discipline is able to reflect upon the way that social science is able to account for it in the first place. This is, in part, a historical argument; many schools of thought in the discipline have drawn on the insights that Critical Theory brings to bear, and as such it has had a broad impact on our understanding of the way social science is conducted.[130] More broadly though, work done under the auspices of Critical Theory has sought to characterise the discipline as having fundamental features that we can understand as relating the problem of harm as an object of study or debate directly to problems that characterise the production of knowledge. Furthermore, the key contemporary theorist of harm in the discipline, Linklater, maintains a key place in his approach to the problem of harm for the kind of engagement that Critical Theory promises.[131] In this vein, our intention is to examine the implications that Critical Theory has for the way that the problem of harm is understood in IS.

Critical Theory and the Problem of Harm

Within the discipline, Critical Theory has been involved in interrogating each of the strategies put forward above in a way that highlights their close interconnection; an approach which can be seen in three of its major theorists. Ashley's attack on neorealism begins by highlighting the errors in the neorealist understanding of world politics, but also proceeds to put forward its implications for practice and reflecting on how its restricted understanding of world order might better be formulated.[132] Cox's synopsis of a Gramscian approach to IS similarly serves to highlight the instrumental function of claims to object-adequacy, and provokes a concern with reflection in calling for theory to be more responsive to a changing world.[133] Finally, Linklater's persistent concern with unjustified forms of oppression has come together in attempts to understand the dynamics of world historical development and

[130] While this is less true for the political realists, many have put forward close ties between Morgenthau and the broader German philosophical tradition from which both he and the Critical Theorists took inspiration. Levine, 'Why Hans Morgenthau Was Not a Critical Theorist (and Why Contemporary IR Realists Should Care)', 96.
[131] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 23.
[132] Ashley, 'The Poverty of Neorealism'.
[133] Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory'.

the potential normative resources that such an awareness might give us.[134] These contributions suggest that addressing the problem of harm in a more complete way is not simply an issue of better responding to the strategies of contention put forward above, but rather rests on our ability to formulate their relationship to each other.

Our argument is that Critical Theory provides a point from which we can begin to better understand the implications of International Studies' fascination with the problem of harm. In doing so, it prompts us to understand the discipline as being involved in the problem of harm in ways which reflect broader social trends, but also in forms that are characteristic of the social sciences. This begins with conceptualising the various strategies that have been used to address it as a whole; what we shall call *the threefold problematic* that arises from the problem of harm which will be used as a heuristic throughout this thesis. In doing so, the three strategies of contention outlined above can be formulated as a single problem field with different aspects. Corresponding to the account given of them above, they can be understood as:

- The problem of object adequacy, or the question of what it is to be correct in our accounts of the world;
- The problem of critical value, which concerns the impact that our changing ideas of harm has upon the world;
- The problem of reflexivity, through which we consider how we might alter and become aware of new forms of harm that arise from our changing understandings of it as a form of worldly activity.

In formulating these problems as an interconnected whole, Critical Theory has provoked changes in the way that the problem of harm is negotiated in the discipline, but also highlighted the way that these issues constitute ongoing processes of refinement and debate centred on the standards that social science should meet.[135] In this context, scholars in International Studies are not 'merely' scientists concerned with the question of getting things correct, nor are they limited to questions concerning the nature of the right or the good, but they pose questions in a way that we can understand the fundamentally *concerned* with the problem of harm in a broad sense. This concern allows us to conceptualise the problem of

[134] For a set of essays that highlights this process, see Andrew Linklater, *Critical Theory and World Politics: Citizenship, Sovereignty and Humanity*, New edition (Routledge, 2007).
[135] Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory', 46–49.

harm in a way that does not rest on the features of particular engagements, but as having characteristics that run throughout many different and competing approaches to disciplinary enquiry. In short, we can understand the tension that the problem of harm provokes within IS as exhibiting features that are familiar from social life more broadly in its drive toward ethical engagement, but also as raising questions that pertain directly to the production of knowledge in the discipline.

The strategies that Critical Theory has pursued throughout its history have, as we shall see in the next chapter, varied considerably. However, they often take the form of occupying one aspect of the threefold problematic with a view to understanding its implications for the other aspects. In this vein, we can see Ashley's argument as occupying a position of reflection from which he can begin to disentangle the complex ties between object adequacy and critical value in neorealism, highlighting an interconnected whole despite the Realists' protestation of their scientific integrity.[136] The importing of Habermasian Critical Theory into the discipline in the work of Ashley and Linklater has sought to put forward new sources of normative value, and in doing so reflects on the history of the international more broadly as well as engaging with questions concerning the objects the discipline should attend to.[137] In each case, we find that normative, scientific and epistemological issues are framed less as straightforward problems for scientific advancement, and more as involving broader processes of reflection on the qualities of social life that involve a complex balancing of evaluation, critique and judgement.[138] Taking this insight and applying it to our understanding of the discipline as characterised by its engagement with the problem of harm, we can begin to see that the complex analysis proposed by Critical Theory may have important implications for how we understand the importance of harm and its consequences for the way in which enquiry centred on the idea of harm is conducted.

A key lesson of Critical Theory for the way we understand harm therefore lies in its insistence on presenting the problem of harm as a whole in a way that is irreducible to its constitutive parts. This argument gives rise to our heuristic of the threefold problematic of

[136] Ashley, 'The Poverty of Neorealism'.
[137] Richard K. Ashley, 'Political Realism and Human Interests'; Andrew Linklater, 'The Question of the Next Stage in International Relations Theory: A Critical-Theoretical Point of View', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 21, no. 1 (3 January 1992): 77–98; Linklater, *Transformation of Political Community*; Andrew Linklater, 'Transforming Political Community: A Response to the Critics', *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1 January 1999): 165–75.
[138] Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory', 56.

object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity and indicates that any engagement with the problem of harm needs to respond to each of these if it is to be adequate to the tension that the problem of harm denotes. The aim, therefore, is to understand the implications of an approach to harm which does not rest purely on one or two of its aspects, but considers the problem of harm as a whole. This task rests on our ability to characterise the threefold problematic and its relational structure, and to investigate the dynamics that result. This characterisation, we suggest, might be best fulfilled by an engagement with the work of the Frankfurt School as the historical antecedent of the development of Critical Theory within IS. In addressing the work of Adorno, Horkheimer and others, we may be able to put forward some of the consequences of their intellectual project for the way that the problem of harm is understood more broadly. Indeed, given the strong influence Critical Theory has had in the discipline, it may be the case that an engagement with this work can clarify understanding of the formation of the threefold problematic itself. Our aim, therefore, is first to gain a better understanding of the significance of the threefold problematic for the problem of harm, and then to proceed in developing its implications for the discipline more broadly.

Conclusion

By focussing on five theoretical transitions in the discipline, this chapter has provided a reading of International Studies that highlights the various ways in which the problem of harm is addressed, although often in an indirect or implicit fashion. The examples given are not intended to be entirely representative of the varied work that occurs in IS, but are illustrative, serving to highlight the viability of an approach that puts forward the problem of harm as a core concern of the discipline. This reading, we argued, suggests that the role that the problem of harm plays in IS was centred on three strategies of contention. These strategies – those of object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity – form three key ways in which the problem of harm is raised time and again in the discipline. However, in adopting the standpoint of Critical Theory, we find that these issues are not separate but intertwined; it is possible to understand them as three distinct aspects of the problem of harm considered from the perspective of knowledge production in the social sciences. This innovation, we argued, may have significant implications for the way that we understand the problem of harm in the discipline.

In characterising IS as a discipline in transition as opposed to a set of isolated theoretical positions, we are able to understand the way in which debates centred on the problem of harm occur in a historical and social context that shapes the way they play out. Beyond the 'great debates', therefore, it is possible to see the way in which disciplinary perspectives have responded to historical change in the broader stock of social knowledge; they are *responses*, not *sui generis* acts of intellectual innovation. Whether the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the formal colonial system, or the development of new understandings of humans' relationship to their environment, approaches in IS have sought to comprehend change through a process that culminates in new understandings and explanations of previously unknown or unacknowledged social phenomena. Our reading highlights how such interventions have a stake in what such changes mean for the discipline at large and its practical implications, and that this can be understood to centre on the problem of harm as a core concern.

Our understanding of how this process works has been deepened following the introduction of Critical Theory to the discipline; with the possibility that the theorist themselves may be implicated in the perpetuation of violence in the social world, the problem of harm has only become more pressing. Through the lens of Critical Theory, we can see that the issues that the problem of harm pushes us to confront are not isolated problems, but reflect a broader set of ethical concerns centred on the way in which knowledge is produced and used. In adopting this position, the various strategies of contention that have characterised debates over harm are limited manifestations of the problem of harm in general. If this is the case, then understanding the problem of harm more fully rests on our ability to characterise the threefold problematic and its relational structure. In order to do this, we will examine the approach taken by the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School; both the theoretical antecedent of many of the theoretical debates examined here and, as we will see, an intellectual project which placed the problem of harm front-and-centre in its theories of society.

Chapter 2 – The Problem of Harm in Critical Theory

Introduction

In one of his more often-quoted phrases, Theodor Adorno proclaimed the contemporary relevance of the problem of harm in his famous dictum that 'to write poetry after Auschwitz would be barbaric', thereby relating the ethical problem posed by suffering directly to a context in which it was no longer possible to fully address it.[139] The development of Critical Theory in its early phases can be understood as being guided by this assertion, persistently trying to find a way of justifying theory construction in the face of overwhelming suffering. He and others of his generation, witness to the instrumentalisation of life in the policies of the Third Reich and the destructive power of the atomic bomb, are perhaps the paradigmatic example of a group of thinkers committed to the problem of harm and its relationship to suffering.[140] This chapter will attempt to examine this concern with a view to evaluating its potential contribution to the discipline of International Studies.

Our argument is that Critical Theory can be understood as responding to the tension that we saw in the introduction; the proliferation of possible forms of harm and their rapid change makes it apparent that our ideas of harm have become more uncertain. In doing so, their explicit commitment to the social situation of suffering can be seen as an implicit acknowledgement of the problem of harm more broadly. When this uncertainty overwhelms our technological capabilities, we find ourselves playing catch up with the Hippocratic Oath, the injunction of which to do no harm was stated so categorically.[141] Indeed, one of the successes of Critical Theory in International Studies has been to highlight the social situation of knowledge production. If this is the case, then our understanding of what is to be included

[139] Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms* (MIT Press, 1997), 34.
[140] Jay closes his history of the Frankfurt School: ''For, so the Frankfurt School always insisted, it was only by the refusal to celebrate the present that the possibility might be preserved of a future in which writing poetry would no longer be an act of barbarism.' Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (University of California Press, 1973), 299.
[141] 'Hippocratic Oath | Ethical Code', *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

or excluded in debates over the problem of harm is interwoven with the broader normative commitments that are part and parcel of both everyday life and the civilizing processes that societies produce and are subject to. In this context, it is unlikely that one could put forward a definitive ideal of social value or action concerning what can harm or be harmed. However, this does not mean it is impossible to explore and perhaps refine; we argued that a key contribution of Critical Theory in IS was to open up this exploration through the problems of object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity, as well as the relationship between them. In doing so, the work of the Frankfurt School might allow us to better understand the problems and opportunities that arise from engaging with the problem of harm.

Critical Theory, however, is not limited to the discipline of IS but encapsulates a broad range of theoretical endeavours, key examples of which were explicitly concerned with how they might engage with the problem of harm and its relationship to suffering. Having seen the way in which Critical Theory within the discipline of IS holds strong links and often operates as a basis for attempts to grapple with the problem of harm in International Studies, we will now examine how key theorists of the Frankfurt School sought implicitly to understand the interaction between theory construction and the ethical issues raised by the problem of harm as a whole. This interaction rests on an understanding of the relationship between academic enquiry – understood as producing concepts – and the experience of suffering subjects, a dynamic that we have seen articulated in Linklater's argument for the importance of the problem of harm.[142] As we shall see, the way in which this was approached in Critical Theory results less in a particular *solution* to the problem of harm so much as it gives us insights into the balance and formulation of the threefold problematic that was a key contribution of Critical Theory to the development of IS as a discipline and which holds wide-ranging consequences for the conduct of social enquiry. The aim, therefore, is to clarify the way in which Critical Theory approached the problem of harm, and to examine the way in which their philosophical position led to a particular understanding of the object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity of scientific accounts. As with the last chapter, this is a reading which highlights the focus of Critical Theory on the problem of harm and its explicit engagement with the suffering of subjects; in the context of Linklater's suggestion of the close relationship between the study of harm in IS and the evaluative role of Critical Theory, it may be the case that the latter has implications for the way in which enquiry is conducted in the former.

[142] Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"', 181.

The theoretical issue at stake for Critical Theory more broadly can be seen in the way that the problem of harm, described by Linklater as foundational for conceptions of social or political order through time, breaks out of the vocabulary that has been developed to account for it both in the context of International Studies and beyond.[143] Contrary to the stasis of concepts that were maintained through religion or political absolutism, we now understand that our understandings, definitions and explanations of harm have to be adapted to historical circumstance in a world that is constantly shifting. The forms of harm that we now recognise are transmitted over huge distances, whether in the form of offshore labour exploitation or the atomic bomb, and have developed in lock-step with developments in technology that bind us together irrevocably. Moreover, the development of increasingly novel and devastating forms of harm only ever appears to travel in one direction, 'from the slingshot to the megaton bomb'.[144] In this context, Critical Theory seeks to demonstrate the social nature of new forms of harm, linking it to the direction of social change under capitalism as the defining feature of social life. More particularly, their argument concerned the essential *alienation* of these forms of destruction from their social origin, a process which allows harmful practices to continue beyond the scope of moral concern.

In order to understand the ways in which International Studies can gain a greater responsiveness to the changing problem of harm, this chapter puts forward a reading of Critical Theory that focusses on their understanding of harm and suffering. In doing so, we draw upon three key themes that characterise the work of Adorno, Horkheimer and others. Firstly, Critical Theory puts forward an understanding of harm that is explicitly conditioned by the modern era and its understanding of the relativist implications of what had previously been considered universal concepts. In the context of the problem of harm, this means that we will address the historicising impulse of Critical Theory as a way of understanding the implications of harm's conceptual variability and its relationship to suffering.[145] Secondly, the understanding of concepts that is put forward by the Frankfurt School places high value on the role of suffering in the world, attempting to pose the public and universal nature of enlightenment concepts against the very personal and private experience of suffering.[146] The relationship between experience and the development of concepts in this way serves to

[143] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 5.
[144] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Routledge & Kegan Paul PLC, 1973), 320.
[145] Ibid., 303.
[146] Max Horkheimer, 'Materialism and Morality', in *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*, trans. G. Frederick Hunter, Matthew S. Kramer, and John Torpey (MIT Press, 1993).

demonstrate important links between the ideas we have and the society we live in. Thirdly, the thoroughgoing attempt to critique epistemological and conceptual formulations through a focus on their historical nature allowed Critical Theory to argue for a strong ethical commitment on the part of social science, but in a way which ultimately limited the historical analysis they were able to undertake.[147] Taken together, these themes have implications for the way in which social scientists engage with the world and constitute a form of engagement which is underpinned by a particular framing of the threefold problematic.

The chapter will proceed as follows. Firstly, it examines the basis that Marx provided for Critical Theory in philosophical and sociological terms. While an exhaustive analysis of is impossible, key themes of Marx's work warrant attention in this context due to the way that the Frankfurt School would generalise his concern with exploitation under capitalist social order to a concern with suffering more broadly. In doing so, Marx provided a starting-point for later thinkers to examine the social origins of suffering and demonstrate the way in which ideal concepts had a historical origin that was subject to critique, thus providing a template for our understanding of how concepts of harm relate to the experience from which they are drawn. Following this, the major part of this chapter will be concerned with the way that the Frankfurt School appropriated this analysis as a way of thinking through the relationship between suffering and the possibility of social change aimed at its amelioration. This leads us to understand how the critical theorists engaged with their historical experience as a way of thinking through the extremes of human suffering and domination. In doing so, we are able to characterise the perspective of Critical Theory and the way that it highlights the problem of harm as an issue for the production of knowledge. Furthermore, we are able to outline the implications that follow from this in their approach to the problem field that we have termed the threefold problematic. As we shall see, this approach to the problem of harm demonstrates the focus of Adorno in particular on a particular kind of critique and simultaneously puts forward important implications for the possibility of a social science aimed at engaging with, and ameliorating, harmful practices, as we consider IS to be. In doing so, the theorists of the Frankfurt School provided an invaluable viewpoint from which

[147] For analyses of this problem from the Eliasian perspective examined in the next chapter, see Artur Bogner, 'Elias and the Frankfurt School', *Theory, Culture & Society* 4, no. 2 (1 June 1987): 249–85; Richard Kilminster, 'Norbert Elias's Post-Philosophical Sociology: From "Critique" to Relative Detachment', in *Norbert Elias and Figurational Research: Processual Thinking in Sociology* (Blackwell, 2011); Richard Kilminster, 'Critique and Overcritique in Sociology', *Human Figurations* 2, no. 2 (July 2013).

to approach the problem of harm, but only in the context of severe limitations on the extent to which it can be understood.

Marxism and the Critical Theory of Society

While the first steps were taken by Kant, and were followed up on by Hegel and Fichte, the work of Karl Marx is often considered as the decisive point at which a concrete critical theory of society was inaugurated; the basic statement of such being the claim that while the philosophers had thus far interpreted the world, the point was to change it.[148] In the face of rapid changes brought about by the industrial revolution and continuous revolutionary developments in the sphere of capital, Marx's impulse toward an analysis of society as a whole, focussed on understanding patterns of social interconnection rather than isolated individuals, would aim at undermining the triumphalism of idealist accounts in a manner that was systematic and, importantly, drawn from the historical presuppositions of idealist bourgeois-economic theories themselves.[149] In this regard, Marx's work laid the foundation for much of Critical Theory to follow. In this section, we present a reading of Marx's work that focusses on his generalisation of exploitation to the broader workings of capitalist society.

It is important to note that, despite the highly systematic nature of Marx's work in *Capital*, his early statements of a critical orientation would be a manifesto toward a 'ruthless criticism of everything existing' that aimed at the distinction between essence and appearance in social life.[150] Specifically, he argued that the proliferation of bourgeois ideals served to disguise the ruthless and efficient exploitation of the proletariat that had come about with the development of capitalism into an all-encompassing social system. In doing so, he inverted Hegel's fascination with ideal concepts and focussed on the way in which bourgeois ideals papered over material history, the core of which was class struggle.[151] As such, the practice of post-enlightenment law, in venerating the individual as the core constituent of social life, hid the uncaring barbarity of capitalist exploitation behind a veil of neutrality that was merely a pretext for class interest as 'He [the worker] and the owner of money meet in the market, and

[148] Karl Marx and Lough, W. (trans), 'Theses on Feuerbach', 1888.
[149] For an example of his approach to Ricardo, whose theory was one of the more dominant in his understanding of economics, see Karl Marx, 'Theories of Surplus Value', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 1st Edition. (Oxford University Press, 1977), 393–413.
[150] Karl Marx, 'Letter to Arnold Ruge', *Marxists.org Archive*, accessed 17 February 2012.
[151] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Communist Manifesto (Chapter 1)', *Marxists.org Archive*, 1848.

deal with each other as on the basis of equal rights […] both, therefore equal in the eyes of the law.'[152] Having submitted, through necessity, to this relationship, the worker becomes subject to the structural system of capital, its whims and tendencies, such as the tendency toward the intensification of labour.[153]

Marx's contribution to the problem of harm lies with his immanent critique, a strategy which allowed him to hold up the concrete fact of exploitation against the ideology of liberty and freedom that underpinned the way in which it was generally described.[154] Despite the development of the ideas associated with the Enlightenment there was little, Marx suggested, that would demonstrate its success when compared with the objective technological capabilities of bourgeois society. While railing against the 'bad' utopias of Proudhon and others, Marx defended the possibility of a free society based on the empirical abundance allowed by the modern means of production and which could be harnessed to ameliorate the exploitation of the proletariat.[155] While forms of exploitation vary throughout history, the impulse toward the expansion of real freedom and the amelioration of real suffering becomes, in Marx's argument, ever more pressing due to the possibility of actually doing so.[156]

Marx's differentiation of the forms of consciousness that characterised a given society and the material social form allowed him to highlight the possibility of objectively pressing needs that were based on the abstract interconnections of social life.[157] In this regard, we are able to discern the ways in which he moved between the promises made by liberal-juridical notions of responsibility and intention and the actual exploitation of the proletariat. In this

[152] Karl Marx, 'Economic Manuscripts: Capital Vol. I - Chapter Six', *Marxists.org Archive*.
[153] Karl Marx, 'Economic Manuscripts: Capital Vol. I - Chapter Fifteen, *Marxists.org Archive*.
[154] Karl Marx, 'Moralizing Criticism and Critical Morality', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 1977), 216–18.
[155] This criticism was at the core of Marx and Engels' distinction between 'scientific' and 'utopian' socialism. See Karl Marx, 'The Poverty of Philosophy', *Marxists.org Archive*, 1847.
[156] This argument lies at the core of the dispute over the labour theory of value, seen as essential to the analysis Marx provides in *Capital*. The uncertain status of the theory in the face of a post-fordist economy has meant that attempts to appeal to Marxism directly today often incorporate the previously unknown texts of the *Paris Manuscripts*, which demonstrate the humanist concerns of the young Marx. Nonetheless, the internal consistency of this link has come under fire from theorists such as Althusser, who argued that the 'epistemic break' demonstrated by the distance between *Capital* and the manuscripts was incommensurable. The manner in which the mode of exploitation can be deriven from Marxist theory remains a key source of contention. See Herbert Marcuse, 'The Foundation of Historical Materialism', *Marxists.org Archive*, 1932. Louis Althusser, 'Feuerbach's "Philosophical Manifestoes" in "For Marx"', *Marxists.org Archive*, 1962.
[157] Marx's grounding of this *as objective* can be seen in his statement that 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.' Karl Marx, 'Economic Manuscripts: Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', 1859.

move, we see the embryonic form of contemporary theories for which social structure is a real moment in the social process that contributes to the proliferation of particular forms of life. Despite wide variations in the attitudes of individual authors towards Marx's work, it is at points such as this that we can see how green theory and theories that articulate the concerns of marginalised groups often take the presuppositions he laid for Critical Theory as essential to an understanding of the broader social whole, as we saw in the first chapter.[158]

For Marx, the relationship between the social position of subjects and their ideas further opens up the possibility of a critique of ideology through which beliefs can be restored to their correct position. Marx's argument thus opens up the possibility that different forms of knowledge, and their object adequacy, varies according to social position such as that found in societies where a division of labour pertains.[159] While whole societies can be enculturated into particular systems of understanding and belief, the development of liberalism with its focus on sacrosanct individuality had served to hide the interdependent nature of the class system under which the exploitation of proletarian labour for the benefit of the capitalist was the norm. However, it is also the case that the 'capitalist' in this case is not just a particular individual, but rather a social role for which the maximisation of profit is the most immediate form of rationality. The disjuncture between being and thought, through which the capitalist can fail to recognise their exploitative practice, is thus the basis for which contradictions can exist under the umbrella of a broader social totality.[160]

Marx's use of the term contradiction takes on several forms.[161] However, all of them are based on the importance of going beyond particular experience in our explanations of social life. In doing so, we might find a degree of truth in common between subjects in a process of negotiation that bears similarities to Linklater's problem of harm. Fundamental to this process for Marx is the way that society emerges from the way in which its means of production are organised; it is possible for social science to examine the interconnections through which the exploitation of the proletariat not only occurs, but is legitimated through

[158] For an examination of Critical Theory in the context of green political thought, see Dobson, 'Critical Theory and Green Politics'. With regard to gender theory and understandings of racism in society, the work of Angela Davis has been highly influential. Her work was highly influenced by her mentorship under Marcuse. 'Interview With Angela Davis | The Two Nations Of Black America |', *PBS: Frontline*, accessed 27 August 2015.
[159] On the basis that it is social being that determines consciousness in the first instance. Marx, 'Economic Manuscripts: Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy'.
[160] In the form of potentially necessary false consciousness. See Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour : A Critique of Epistemology* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 196.
[161] For an account that holds particular regard for its relationship to logic, see Lawrence Wilde, 'Logic: Dialectic and Contradiction', *Marxists.org Archive*, 1991.

the production of knowledge. In beginning from the experience of the proletariat, rather than abstract concepts such as liberalism suggests, we are able to discern the interconnections and interdependencies of social life in a more object adequate way. Furthermore, it is possible to understand that the past failures of our explanations lay not just with the failure of knowledge, but with historical limitations upon its production.

Marx and the Theme of Alienation

Marx's argument is taken a step further through his generalisation of the exploitation of the proletariat to a broader claim on the qualities of alienation. This is of interest to us because the arguments concerning exploitation, pertinent at the time of the industrial revolution and the basis for the rhetorical effect of Marx's writing, are grounded historically in the chapters in *Capital* that concern factory machinery and industry and may be less relevant today.[162] However, the continued relevance of Marx's approach to exploitation lies with his claim that it is an *objective* quality of capitalist social organisation, rather than a historical particular. This has particular relevance for IS given Linklater's examination of exploitation as a form of harm, as well as the common use of exploitation as a fulcrum for approaches such as world systems theory.[163] In examining exploitation through Marx, we gain an insight into how ideas of harm relate to our explanations of society.

The argument that capitalism inherently tends toward the alienation of subjects finds grounding in Marx's claim that 'Man is a zoon politkon in the most literal sense; he is not only a social animal, but an animal that can individualised only within society.'[164] The features of subjectivity that we have come to recognise as human, collectively called 'species being' by Marx, cannot be developed except in the context of society, which has existence both through and beyond the existence of any given subject. It is this being that is suffocated

[162] Marx, 'Economic Manuscripts: Capital Vol. I — Chapter Fifteen (Machinery and Modern Industry)'.
[163] Andre Gunder Frank and Barry K. Gills, *The World System: Five Hundred Years Or Five Thousand?* (Psychology Press, 1996), 71.
[164] Karl Marx, 'Economic Manuscripts: Appendix I: Production, Consumption, Distribution, Exchange', *Marxists.org Archive*, 1857. This is elaborated throughout the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, e.g. 'But even if I am active in the field of science, etc. – an activity which I am seldom able to perform in direct association with other men – I am still socially active because I am active as a man. It is not only the material of my activity – including even the language in which the thinker is active – which I receive as a social product. My own existence is social activity. Therefore what I create from myself I create for society, conscious of myself as a social being.' Karl Marx, 'The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts: 3rd Manuscript', *Marxists.org Archive*, accessed 19 August 2015.

by alienation, allowing us to understand this as a way in which the social structure of society restricts our understanding of the suffering that others experience.

The process by which alienation comes about can be seen in production, and consists of the way in which social relationships between people come to be seen as relationships between things:

> 'The object that labour produces, its product, confronts it as an alien being, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labour is labour that has solidified itself into an object, made itself into a thing, the objectification of labour. The realization of labour is its objectification. In political economy this realization of labour appears as a loss of reality for the worker, objectification as a loss of the object or slavery to it, and appropriation as alienation, as externalization.'[165]

This is not merely the externalization of vital forces, i.e. the physical labour power required for production, but the submission to a process over which the worker has no power, that of production under the aegis of the wage relation. In this relationship, it is not that labour is carried out voluntarily, but rather that the means of production are provided by the capitalist in a form that may be contrary to the development of the proletarians' species being. The expenditure of her labour power operates in the context of a given machine or factory, not a vocation of her own choosing. This elevates the alienation of labour beyond the exploitation of any particular worker, and toward alienation as a general feature of capitalist society. As rationalization in the production process takes place, this is further intensified in the way that piecemeal and repetitive tasks may only produce part of the total commodity, as is indicated by the development of the assembly line.[166] We can therefore see that exploitation is underpinned by structural forces that prevent the worker from attaining their full potential; it

[165] Karl Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 78.

[166] Marx draws attention to the way in which the worker becomes himself part of the factory 'machine' in which he contributes in, and to, only a minor part: 'Machinery is put to a wrong use, with the object of transforming the workman, from his very childhood, into a part of a detail machine. In this way, not only are the expenses of his reproduction considerably lessened, but at the same time his helpless dependence upon the factory as a whole, and therefore upon the capitalist, is rendered complete. […] In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workman, who becomes its mere living appendage.' Marx, 'Economic Manuscripts: Capital Vol. I — Chapter Fifteen', *Marxists.org Archive*.

is not just that they do not have control over the products of their own labour or social being, but that the solidarity they might find with others is restricted due to the form of labour they are involved in.

We can understand alienation as the point at which knowledge of the broader social conditions underlying exploitation is restricted. Marx's account, at a foundational moment for Critical Theory, serves to clarify this relationship by abstracting from the historical conditions that constitute particular instances of exploitation. Exploitation, as the physical and material aspect of this alienating process can only be generalised once we understand it in a far broader sense than a given worker being overworked or underpaid. This pertains as long as the relationship of the labourer to his product is already defined – the social conditions that lead to production exist before and after the process of any particular production, but also before and after the process by which the labourer comes to be in her social setting. Moving between these themes therefore allows us to understand the relationship between the suffering (in this case, particularly of the proletarian) and the knowledge that we have of it that is also constructed in a given context. This context, for Marx, is the objective framework that underlies capitalist society and therefore impacts upon the way in which we produce knowledge.

Marx: Objectivity, Tendency and Social Structure

As we have seen, the harmful situation that is inherent to capitalist society rests on not a particular worker, but workers in general. The extent to which social conditions exist prior to, and persist after, the intervention or existence of particular actors is a key argument for the objective existence of social structure beyond these actors and which allows us to speak of it as a whole. The theme of time remains central to many reading of Marx's work.[167] It is the relationship between the time experienced by subjects and the longer term structure of capital that underpins his famous statement on the objectivity of history:

> "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen

[167] William James Booth, 'Economies of Time: On the Idea of Time in Marx's Political Economy', *Political Theory* 19, no. 1 (1 February 1991): 7–27.

> by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past."[168]

We thus find that the objective conditions that confront subjects are not only theirs to negotiate and survive, but rather have far wider social consequence. The complex systems in which they are coerced and entangled are not constituted by their presence in particular, but rather is the concrete 'because it is the concentration of many determinations' that are diverse, but unified within the societal totality.[169] A full understanding of social relations under capitalism thus needs to involve an account that is abstracted from personal experience in proportion to the way in which capital does not require particular subjects, but a more general form such as labour, in order to function.

In engaging in social life, subjects work upon this system of objective conditions in a way that reflects their understanding and interpretation of them. It is this process of conceptualisation, either received or based in the subjects' social position that dictates the appearance of social relations and is the basis of the ideology that Marx puts forward as the superstructure of everyday life. This parallels the production process; the proletarian has no choice of what she works upon, and receives the concepts which allow her to do so. In this way, social structure becomes an objective force despite the way that it originally arose from the labour of those that participate in it.[170]

When we consider the role of this objective social structure in the perpetuation of harmful conditions, we are forced to consider talk of rights and responsibilities in a new way. The moral responsibility of the capitalist cannot be addressed by the worker in those terms, as she finds herself embroiled in a particular objective social relationship that is independent of his subjective emotions or capacity for moral reasoning. The capitalist is not defined by his relationship to aspects of his personality, but rather by his role; to maximise surplus value as the objective structure of society dictates. Marx's positioning of the economic component of social life, as the fundamental basis of its operation, means that it tends to dominate the

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[168] Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 1st Edition. (Oxford University Press, 1977), 300.

[169] Karl Marx, 'Grundrisse', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 1st Edition. (Oxford University Press, 1977), 352.

[170] "The economists of the seventeenth century, e.g., always begin with the living whole, with population, nation, state, several states, etc.; but they always conclude by discovering through analysis a small number of determinant, abstract, general relations such as division of labour, money, value, etc. As soon as these individual moments had been more or less firmly established and abstracted, there began the economic systems[…] By the former method the complete conception passes into an abstract definition; by the latter the abstract definitions lead to the reproduction of the concrete subject in the course of reasoning." Ibid., 351–52.

language, conventions and institutions lying at the superstructural level, even when they are designed to mitigate some of the harsher tendencies of capitalist social systems. With regard to labour campaigns in areas such as the working day, occasional gains may be rolled back as soon as economic conditions demand that they be. The tendency that wins over the long term however, is the maximization of unpaid labour that is expropriated as surplus value.[171] In this way, capitalist society always tends toward exploitation despite efforts at moral or ethical reform.

The difference between essence and appearance both provides for change and demonstrates the way in which concepts or abstractions can become influential in social life. What Marx's work allows us to understand is how exploitation is perpetuated by alienation; the potential for social change inherent to concepts is also a potential for limiting this change when concepts become rigid and inflexible.[172] The collective realisation by the proletariat of their past, present and future exploitation would, according to Marx, pave the way to revolution and a communist future. However, getting a grasp of the exploited position of the proletariat requires an understanding of social life that runs contrary to historical circumstance and the appearance mediated by prevailing culture. The historical understanding of a concept, whether slavery, property or exploitation, defines the way in which it is reproduced or transformed; Marx hopes to provide an account through which the dynamics of the problem of harm faced by the proletariat are rendered clear and overcome.

Marx's demonstration of the way in which the appearance of social relations become the condition of their own obfuscation points us toward an understanding of how social situations become less than transparent to those that take part in them. We therefore lose sight of the social origins of our concepts, and they become less adequate to the way in which social reality changes. At the beginning of *Capital*, he argues that relationship between labouring subjects becomes the appearance of relationship between things:

> "A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social

[171] Karl Marx, 'Capital: Volume One', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 1st Edition. (Oxford University Press, 1977), 465.
[172] Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 60.

> relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour."[173]

This shows us that capitalist social order has the consequence of perpetuating a limited and particular structure through which people identify. This alienated condition becomes systematised in the concepts that we use to navigate the social world, and are reproduced as long as we fail to see outside of these limits. In the context of our investigation, this allows us to understand the limiting role that particular concepts of harm can have; in relying on them, we come to forget the changing social background to which they refer. The role of social science in this context is to engage in a practice by which we come to understand and appreciate these hidden histories.

If this is the case, exploitation and alienation are not merely a function of opportunism or the abuse of power. In generalising aspects of the social life of workers, Marx argues that we begin to see an objective social structure that dominates over all spheres of life. It is these objective conditions, and their realisation by the historical subject of the proletariat, that eventually leads history toward the abolition of exploitation, rather than its mere reform:

> "When socialist writers ascribe this historic role to the proletariat, it is not […] because they consider the proletarians as gods. Rather the contrary. Since the abstraction of all humanity, even of the semblance of humanity, is practically compete in the full-grown proletariat; since the conditions of life of the proletariat sum up all the conditions of life of society today in all their inhuman acuity; […] yet at the same time has not only gained theoretical consciousness of that loss, but through urgent, no longer disguiseable, absolutely imperative need […] is driven directly to revolt against that inhumanity; it follows that the proletariat can and must free itself. But it cannot free itself without abolishing the conditions of its own life."[174]

[173] Marx, 'Capital: Volume One', 436.
[174] Karl Marx, 'The Holy Family', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 1st Edition. (Oxford University Press, 1977), 135.

The proletarians' realisation of their oppression must, according to Marx, take place at the intersection of two levels of analysis. At the base, material level of the forces of production, labour must aim to reorganise society. However, this can only occur through once they confront society's ideology with the objective condition of alienation; Marx hopes to provide the conceptual tools by which they might do so. A given society, in this case the mode of production, contains the seeds of its own radical overcoming due to its reliance on ideational factors that social science can contribute to changing.

Despite the proliferation of ways of thinking that would restrict a proper understanding of their exploitation, the proletariat in Marx's account find themselves able to change society from within. This particular revolution, of course, was not fully realised. However, in answering the problem of change in society by abstracting the real possibilities of a given historical situation, Marx provides us a way of approaching the problem of harm through social science. From this understanding, several important questions arise, foremost among which is the question of structural determination; given the production of obfuscating knowledge in capitalist society, how does the social scientist know they are right when they approach the concept of harm? Secondly, it is important to consider whether Marx's account, linked as it is to a certain idea of technology and production, is relevant today. These issues begin to lay out some of the key themes that were at the core of the Frankfurt School's reappropriation of Marx's efforts and which served to preserve his important contribution to social thought.

The Marxist Inheritance: Socialising the Concept of Harm

The work of Marx contains three arguments that are key to our investigation. Firstly, he argued that it was possible to refer to general social position, rather than individuals as such, and in doing so put forward a way in which we can understand harm as reaching beyond the harmed subject. Secondly, by paying attention to the structured and systematic form that exploitation takes in capitalist society, Marx understood social organisation not merely as a conditioning factor in harmful practices, but as actually contributing to their production. Finally, Marx's argument for ideology as a product of social organisation allows us to understand that social science might be able to contribute to the critique of concepts that contribute to the maintenance of harmful social orders. The sum of these efforts is an understanding of harm in social terms rather than concepts received from social authorities.

In this regard, it allows us to understand the relationship between the object-adequacy of our accounts and their critical value; in providing more correct accounts of harm, we begin to see avenues for social change that might ameliorate it. While Marx's arguments primarily concerned exploitation, Critical Theory sought to expand this story to encompass broader areas of social life.

In the view of the Critical Theorists, the broader implications of Marx's argument after the industrial revolution became increasingly apparent as the revolution failed to materialise. The broader history of Western Marxism would be constituted by attempts to come to terms with this fact, as well as attempts to locate some other factor that might buttress the failed predictive power of Marx's theory. In doing so, it reached beyond Marx's stricter definition of the proletariat to ask broader questions concerning what is necessary for social orders to be possible, a question which continues to be fruitful for many of the theories we examined in the last chapter. The development of Critical Theory can be seen as a process of reflection upon the significance of Marx's focus on the proletariat, ultimately rejecting these for a focus on a more contemporary historical context.

These later attempts to reconceptualise Marx's work would attempt to revise the economic determinism and teleology of his approach by placing greater value on the subjective consciousness of the proletariat as a supplement to the focus on social contradiction, thus further emphasising the importance of concepts and ideas. However, if the ideas produced by a society reflect its means of production and the social position of the thinker, then it is viable to consider Marx's science as much a reflection of his own time as it was expressive of some fundamental truth. This demonstrates the key problem of the positioned nature of knowledge production that Critical Theory was addressing.

For Marx, concepts of harm vary with historical situation, ensuring that it runs parallel and is linked to the process of historical change. If it is social being that determines consciousness, then subjects are bought into the world into definite conditions, some of which are harmful, and their awareness of this (and thus the possibility of addressing the problem) is determined by these conditions also.[175] This includes the change from an individual's recognition of the problem of exploitation to a far wider, indeed global, articulation of class consciousness in the face of alienation at what is, for Marx, the end of

[175] Karl Marx, 'Preface to a Critique of Political Economy', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 1st Edition. (Oxford University Press, 1977), 389.

pre-history. Prior to this event, we can say that knowledge is in some ways determined, thus serving to preserve social order as much as it can serve to destroy it. The rise of the Soviet Union in particular shows us that even with the best intentions and a focus on the exploitation of the most vulnerable in society, the authoritarian consequences that arose from the certainty of Marxist-inspired social movements place any attempt at theoretical extrapolation or prediction dangerous at best. These tensions lie at the core of the Frankfurt School project, to which we now turn.

The Frankfurt School and the Objectivity of Harm

In attempting to grasp the brutal and violent outcomes of economic and social exploitation that characterised social order under capitalism, the theorists of the Frankfurt School placed the problem of harm at the centre of their enquiry. Following Marx, they sought to incorporate the *objective* dimension of suffering that went beyond its expression, of which harm can be understood as a socially recognised form. In this move, we see the foundation for later work such as Linklater's, for whom the problem of harm operates as a problem-field drawn from the private experience of suffering and translated between subjects. While driven by normative evaluation, critical theories such as these tend toward a focus on objective social forces as a way of understanding the way that concepts are socially produced. Adorno's claim that that philosophy 'lives on because the time to realise it was missed', placed at the very beginning of his *magnum opus,* can be seen to demonstrate this belief; the fate of theory can be understood only against the background of a world which moves beyond the social limits of subjective comprehension.[176] While a concern with exploitation would continue in the work of the Institute, Horkheimer (as director) would put forward the more fundamental category of *suffering* as a key aspect of the normative problem that Critical Theory was concerned with, putting it forward in a visceral fashion that moves beyond economic concerns:

> "The only things that would remain unchanged through the ages are overpowering physical pain and all the extreme situations in which

[176] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 3.

> man is no longer master of himself and is thrust out of his societally-oriented spiritual existence back into nature."[177]

As we saw with Marxism, Horkheimer's understanding of historical experience concerns the way that subjects find themselves the recipients of a history that is not necessarily subject to the concepts held by the reasoning subject. Nature here can be understood as the myriad forms of determination (social and otherwise) which exist objectively beyond any historically-situated conceptual scheme. This sets up a framework by which suffering is characterised by an ultimately indescribable experience that is appropriated, however vaguely, by the process by which concepts of harm are negotiated. That this is a problem for Critical Theory demonstrates a key commitment to the problem of harm and its explanation, as well as an acknowledgement of the way that forms of suffering are ultimately knowable only through experience; it may reach beyond our ability to explain it in general terms. This seeming contradiction – between the private experience of suffering and the social conceptualisation of harm – outlines the ethical imperative of addressing the problem of harm despite the problems that might arise in doing so. It is both the case that we are driven to address the problem of harm, but also that the particularity of suffering gets lost in the process.

Horkheimer's claim generalises the idea of suffering and ethical concern toward it in a way that moves beyond the triumphalism of particular ideologies, such as liberalism, communism or fascism. Key to this argument is the way that history had shown how societies could rationalise concentration camps, colonialism and atomic bomb to the point where the most unimaginable suffering became mere technology at the service of some arbitrary good. Following on from Marx's analysis, the lives of the victims, conceived as subjects, had been reduced to relations between things in the manner that bureaucracy made imperative. Indeed, the aim was to highlight the suffering that was incumbent upon the increasing manipulation of nature that had been inaugurated by subjective reason:

> "The idealistic fable of the ruse of reason, which extenuates the horrors of the past by pointing to the good ends they served, actually

[177] Max Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason* (Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 1993), 14.

> babbles out the truth: that blood and misery stick to the triumphs of society. The rest is ideology." [178]

We find here a further theme that would characterise the work of the Frankfurt School, and particularly that of Adorno and Horkheimer. Rather than nature being a romanticised and anthropocentric view of non-human nature, the concept here includes the social environment in a manner that highlights the received and reified nature of historical structures and situations that Sohn-Rethel would label 'real abstractions'.[179] This 'second nature' is a key element in their theorising that puts forward the way in which subjects are both part of, but not reducible to, the society in which they are situated. Subjective and societal (often considered 'objective' by Horkheimer) rationality cannot, therefore, be elided.[180] Regardless of the demands of rationality upon the human subject, it is entirely possible for society to be, when considered as a whole, irrational. This irrationality can be seen in Marcuse's analysis of the development of technological and industrial society.[181] In such situations, the eccentric and unforeseen consequences of the broader social totality can be understood as having the functional status of 'nature' to the individual human subject and are not amenable to reason.

It is this lack of control that prompts Horkheimer to consider suffering, if not the category of harm *per se*, to be the category at the core of critical theory, serving to resist co-option and maintain the possibility of social change.[182] Prior to all ideology-inflected and abstract forms of knowledge, the idea of suffering as a foundational element of human experience can be understood as an example of Schopenhauer's influence on Horkheimer's philosophical development.[183] The fundamental fact of history is that people die, whether for good reasons, bad reasons or, indeed, no reason at all.[184] The essential point that is being

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[178] Ibid., 66.

[179] Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 60.

[180] Horkheimer's idea of objective reason implies an orientation toward totality that he finds to be lacking in post-enlightenment reason, in which the subject had come to dominate and be unaware of the tendencies that characterised society as a whole. It is important to note that this too was subject to historical variation; objective reason can be seen in religion just as it would be in a more rational society. As such it concerns the form of rationality that confronts the subject when society is considered as an object of thought. Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, New Edition (Continuum, 2004), 4–5.

[181] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man : Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, 2nd Edition. (London: Routledge, 1991), 9.

[182] Peter M.R. Stirk, *Max Horkheimer: A New Interpretation* (Prentice-Hall, 1992), 201–2.

[183] Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (University of California Press, 1984), 212.

[184] Stirk, *Max Horkheimer*, 201.

made here, in Adorno's terms, is that theory must confront suffering as a fact of unreason in an apparently reasonable society. Thus far, suffering had escaped our understanding and led to horrific consequences in the process. His definition of suffering as 'objectivity that weighs upon the subject' allows us to contextualise the problem of harm historically as a struggle to encapsulate suffering within the concept of harm in the knowledge that previous attempts to do so had failed.[185] However, the recognition of the suffering of others, appropriated in the concept of harm, remains a key point at which the impenetrability of social life can come to be filtered through the restraining force of moral concern.

This idea of solidarity, as with much of the work of the early Critical Theorists, was grounded upon a contradiction that was understood to be immanent to modern society. This was located in a difference between the emphatic concepts promised by ideology, and their technical implementation and rationalisation. The historic facts of the matter always fall short of their normative promise when put forward in historical circumstance, but their promise remained essential. The historical period in which these arguments were made once again bear the imprint of a biography that was witness to suffering on a previously unknown scale:

> 'The merciless structure of eternity could generate a community of the abandoned, just as injustice and terror in society result in the community of those who resist… If young people recognize the contradiction between the possibilities of human powers and the situation on this earth, and if they do not allow their view to be obscured either by nationalistic fanaticism or by theories of transcendental justice, identification and solidarity may be expected to become decisive in their lives.'[186]

The interest of Critical Theory lies in the way that the promise of such emphatic concepts is mediated through the knowledge practices of society. While the failure of the revolution dismissed the idea of a universal historical subject, it became clear that the objective suffering inherent to capitalist society was in some way obscured by the knowledge for which it formed the basis.[187] This is a generalisation of the problem Marx engaged in above; the aim is to uncover the role of ideology in the constitution and integration of the

[185] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 18.
[186] Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, 82.
[187] Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, 100.

social form. This would allow the recognition of forms of suffering *as harm*, and thus pave the way for a reintroduction of ethical consideration into social life.

We can understand the agenda put forward by Critical Theory to be an approach to the problem of harm that focusses heavily on the dialectical mediation of the structural determination of social life and the concepts with which subjects approach it. This suggests a speculative approach to the problem of harm that was linked to the developmental Hegelian influence underpinning their efforts.[188] In rejecting orthodox Marxist determinism, the Frankfurt School theorists instead focussed on the possibility that social science might leverage the difference between concepts and the reality of social life in a way that can highlight sites of normative engagement. At its core, it was clear that this was a broader relationship for the members of the Institute than it was for Marx; rather than class, the possibility of breaking through the reification of social life lay with the universality of suffering. This clearly highlights a potential avenue through which International Studies can relate to the problem of harm. However, in doing so, this avenue led Critical Theory to their logical conclusion – the threefold problematic laid out in the last chapter – with significant consequences for the way that we might approach the problem of harm.

Knowledge and Experience in the Domination of Nature

The darkest turn taken by the theorists of the Frankfurt School is often considered to be Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[189] In this extrapolation of the activities of labour and reason, the authors trace the forms of knowledge that characterise the process of science in order to understand the developing relationship between Enlightenment knowledge and domination. While *Dialectic* was and remains controversial, it represents the logical end-point of the thought of the Frankfurt School in a way that highlighted the consequences of alienation for the problem of harm. The core of this process involves questioning what it means to utilise reason against the background of a reality that pre-exists and determines the situation, and thus the possibilities, of social thought and ethical reflection. Examining the arguments of *Dialectic*, therefore, gives us an insight into the close relationship between thought and the world that was so essential to the contribution of Critical Theory in International Studies.

[188] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 17.
[189] Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, New Edition (Verso Books, 1997).

While Marx had drawn attention to the received nature of history, particularly with regard to the situation of the working class, *Dialectic* traces this back to a more fundamental stage in which the subject finds themselves located against the background of an unknown, dangerous and unpredictable nature. As such, the isolation of subjective reason, and therefore reification, serves as a preservation mechanism that instrumentalises nature in the service of survival while simultaneously providing the basis for further practices of domination and exclusion. The history this development is one that culminates in the historical ideology of the Enlightenment, as the point at which the domination of nature serves to sever the subject from the limitations of mythical thought. In the example of Francis Bacon, the authors find the continuation of a rationalisation process which reveals the 'radio as a sublimated printing press, the dive bomber as a more effective form of artillery'.[190] The development of reason in the form of instrumental science can be understood only as a method of control which holds no boundary sacred. While developments in rationalisation can be justified in their own terms, *Dialectic* seeks to situate this against the background of the sphere of nature in order to contrast the increasing separation of instrumental and objective reason.

It is precisely this process that provokes the self-destruction of the normative promise held out by the Enlightenment, the freedom from a world that dominated the subject in unknown and unpredictable ways.[191] In locating the driver of reason in the isolated subject, Enlightenment reason sowed the seeds for the use of technology as a means for the domination of subjects over each other. In depending upon subjective reason, the subject is capable only of categorisation such that the essence of the object, including that which might form the basis for reconciliation, lies out of view. Meanwhile, the compulsion to control and to manipulate leads one to ever greater attempts at grasping otherness in its entirety, which both lends greater degrees of control and technology and haunts the process of reason because of its basis in unknown nature.[192] At each stage, the subject finds themselves supported by another layer of myth that must be destroyed, a pressure which is driven by the location of reason itself within a concrete historical situation which forms an unacknowledged historical context lying objectively beyond the definitional activities of subjects.

[190] Ibid., 4.
[191] Ibid., 32.
[192] 'Nothing at all may remain outside, because the mere idea of outsideness is the very source of fear.' Ibid., 16.

While this short outline fails to do justice to the broader themes of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, it highlights the manner in which it is possible for concepts to fail in their attempt to grasp reality; the potential for object-adequate explanation becomes limited to the extent that the concept of harm becomes separated from the experience of suffering that it attempts to describe. In reasoning from the position of a supposedly-isolated subject, the pattern of knowledge changes from one in which objective factors are inseparable from those of subjective concern to one in which the possibilities inherent in the object are limited to those amenable to instrumental rationality. Where the ends of social action were previously justified through their relationship to an idea of the absolute good – whether God or an ordered society – the focus is now one in which individual self-preservation is the ultimate arbiter of success.[193] The development of subjective reason as a guiding principle thus leads to subjects' separation from the historical processes that they contribute to; while gaining the ability to manipulate nature, they are nonetheless tied up in practices of domination. The experience of suffering, in Critical Theory, therefore retains the potential to break outside of established categories in a way that serves to threaten the basis of falsely universalised knowledge. The argument of the *Dialectic* therefore results in a formulation of the kind of exclusion that we saw toward gender and indigenous groupings in the first chapter; moreover, it provides a *generalisable* framework to understand how the contributions of these accounts to the problem of harm are precluded. Furthermore, it suggests that by highlighting the genuine experience of suffering subjects, a fuller understanding of the problem of harm might be realised.

History and Myth

The majority of the wide-ranging scope of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is put forward through an analysis of myth, the themes of which can be understood as mediating between the attempt to provide definitions through reason and the unexamined ideas subjects receive. This runs parallel to the role that we have suggested social science plays in examining, and re-examining, our concepts of harm such that their relationship to suffering can be understood more clearly. After philosophy 'missed its moment' of affirmation, Adorno in particular would push his critique of concepts beyond that of Marx, rejecting any affirmation of concepts and attempting to demonstrate how the autonomy of the Enlightenment individual

[193] Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, 3–4.

was always socially determined by ritual and myth.[194] In line with Marx's critical theory however, the aim remained one of showing the historical nature of ideas that were assumed to be natural, and thus a destabilisation of the epistemic authority held by the status quo. In the context of the threefold problematic, this approach allows us to understand Critical Theory as a process of reflection upon the social and historical nature of our ideas of harm; despite the authority of scientific knowledge, it does not argue from a position of impartiality but always reflects patterns of domination.

Conceptual thought for the Frankfurt School consists of subjective reason that is objectified in historical context, operating as an abstraction and objectification of the aspects of experience that it seeks to appropriate. The essence of conceptual thought, therefore, is the promise of freedom from the pure determination of natural existence, but at the same time the developing means of domination; it is both the case that concepts free us, but also that they aid in our restraint.[195] In Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis of the *Odyssey*, there was nothing other than conceptual thought that could preserve Odysseus in the face of inhuman nature, but utilising such constitutes a renunciation of the fullness of experience in order to preserve the self. .[196] This, they argue, is the prototype of the bourgeois individual, who recognises the rational content present in the rituals of self-preservation while denying their specifically exotic nature:

> "However, when he encounters primeval powers that are neither domesticated nor etiolated, he doesn't find it so easy. He can never engage in direct conflict with the exotically surviving mythic forces, but has to recognize the status of the sacrificial ceremonies in which he is constantly involved – he dare not contravene them […] The fact that the old sacrifice itself had in the meantime become irrational is to the intelligence of the weaker party the mere, acceptable idiocy of ritual. The letter of its law is strictly observed. But the now meaningless sentence contradicts itself in that its very ordinance always provides for its own dissolution. The

[194] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 3. For the differences between Horkheimer and Adorno, see Jurgen Habermas, 'Remarks on the Development of Horkheimer's Work', in *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives* (MIT Press, 1993), 58.
[195] 'Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power.' Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 9.
[196] Ibid., 67.

> very spirit that dominates nature repeatedly vindicates the superiority of nature in competition. All bourgeois enlightenment is one in the requirement of sobriety and common sense – a proficient estimate of the ratio of forces."[197]

The analysis of myth here reveals the account as one that is truly dialectical; the bourgeois individual is one who navigates nature through progressive rationalisation while at the same time finding themselves constantly entwined within it, unwittingly part of the broader sweep of history while being concerned only with the present and particular. The seeds of freedom from mythology are also, then, the continuation of domination over ones natural basis in the form of renunciation.[198] In elaborating upon the enlightenment as myth, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* provides us with a way of understanding the relationship of post-enlightenment society as involved in strategies of domination that extend to concepts themselves. In the context of the problem of harm, a focus on the object adequacy of our accounts is necessary but insufficient; concepts themselves can serve as a source of unacknowledged suffering in light of our attempts to grasp it. This forces us to constantly reconsider our relationship to developmental ideas of scientific development.

Situating Harm and Suffering

The outline of the approach put forward above demonstrates the intertwining of history and instrumental reason in conceptual thought; as in the first chapter, the critical theorists repeatedly highlighted the changing background against which the problem of harm occurs. While we can understand suffering as the ethical driving force of Critical Theory, the concept of harm is something historical, an abstraction founded on the appropriation of particular social relations. This starting point is evident from historical change, in which conceptions of harm found in different times and spaces are clearly conceived according to the subjective interpretation of the social form and mediated through its objectivity.[199] The

[197] Ibid., 56–57.
[198] Ibid., 57.
[199] Conceptions of harm, therefore, are susceptible to power relations in the sense of Marx's analysis of Bourgeois law. While conceptions of law are formulated subjectively, they are then put forward through the objective social form, i.e. the class struggle. See Karl Marx, 'Marx's Defence Speech at His Trial', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 1st Edition. (Oxford University Press, 1977), 274–75.

critique of ideology, from Marx onwards, has served to highlight that this occurs in a particular way.[200]

The key point to make here is that the positing of a conception of harm operates through a process of identity thinking – Adorno's term for definition in terms of concepts. This serves to reify an object by rendering it equivalent with its limited conceptual formulation based on the reasoning process of the subject.[201] While the social category of harm is prompted by the objective experience of suffering, it does not encompass all possible experiences of suffering as such. The attempt to define a social category thus remains at the mercy of historical change through which the limitation of subjective concept-formation is revealed; harm develops in new ways that evades our concepts. The way in which subjective thought affirms itself – its positive moment – pushes beyond conceptual identity and necessarily incorporates that which is not permitted by its own definition; both the fullest content of subjective expression and the natural basis of thought are renounced but remain as a *residuum* that haunts the category as its potential overcoming.[202] In this regard, having made the promise of a life free of suffering in the concept of harm, we are then haunted by its persistence. This bears strong parallels to our examination of the problem of harm in International Studies; in responding to the suffering caused by war, and repeatedly returning to the problem of harm, the discipline would seem to be orbiting around the way in which suffering changes and escapes definition. As Adorno, then, we might suggest that the importance of approaching the problem of harm through Critical Theory lies in breaking through this haunting while acknowledging the necessary role of the positioning of social science in this process.[203]

Horkheimer in particular would retain the idea that bourgeois ideas continued to hold some value.[204] In particular, the enlightenment itself, despite the partial and doctrinaire character of its emergence, nonetheless reflects the impulse toward the rejection of myth that

[200] Karl Marx, 'The German Ideology', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 1977), 164.
[201] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 4.
[202] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 45.
[203] 'For the mind (*Geist)* is indeed not capable of producing or grasping the totality of the real, but it may be possible to penetrate the detail, to explode in miniature the mass of merely existing reality.' Benjamin Snow, 'Introduction to Adorno's "The Actuality of Philosophy"', *Telos* 1977, no. 31 (20 March 1977).
[204] Stirk, *Max Horkheimer*, 207.

is characteristic of the drive toward freedom.[205] However, the limited nature of identity thinking ensures that the historical manifestation of a given concept cannot fulfil its content short of its historical overcoming. By way of example, the sociohistorical conditions that allow for the rise of the bourgeois conception of freedom are precisely those that repress the universal expression of that value – i.e. the recognition of freedom's objective value against the totality rather than merely its subjective idealisation.[206] *The promise* constituted by ideals, such as the principle that we might one day be free from harm is always betrayed by compromise when they come to be practically manifested.

Critical Theory contributes to our thinking about the problem of harm by theorising the way that the fullness of utopian concepts in terms of normative ambition pushes us to study the way in which they fall short of this promise in concrete terms. The idea of a critical theory is, therefore, to highlight the objective grounding that underpins the hope found in concepts, and to open up a space from which we can consider the ways in which they are disappointed. The problem of harm, in the fashion we have put forward, is an empirically recurrent example of this disappointment in social life. From the point of view of Critical Theory we therefore argue that a thoroughgoing mediation of subject and object, experience and abstract category, can help us understand the promise held out by the concept of harm and the problems with the way in which it is abstracted. This is in line with Adorno and Horkheimer's emphasis on the explosion of the concept by way of truth as such, while famously resisting the temptation to posit the point at which the burden of suffering might be redeemed.[207] In understanding the problem of harm in this way, International Studies constitutes a social scientific attempt to close the gap between experience and concepts; the continuing vitality of the problem of harm lies both in the continuous development of more responsive forms of harm and the changing forms of suffering to which they refer.

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[205] 'Whoever resigns himself to life without any rational reference to self-preservation would, according to the enlightenment – and Protestantism – regress to prehistory.' Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 29.

[206] Theodor W. Adorno, *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964-1965*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone, 1 edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 178.

[207] The common education of Pollock, Adorno and Horkheimer under the neo-Kantian Hans Cornelius provides one reason why the critiques of idealism deployed by the various members of the institute had so much in common. This was, perhaps, further embedded under Horkheimer's directorship. His claim that in idealism, the 'intellectual force whose essential traits are antecedently fixed' (the Kantian categories of understanding) is the 'manifestation of a unitary principle.' While Hegel would dialecticise the Kantian universal subject, the final turn to absolute spirit is a mere delaying of the same function. Cited in Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, 214.

The Problem of Harm and the Universal

The locus of the Frankfurt School's contribution to the study of forms of harm, and indeed to philosophy and social theory more generally, consists in an account of the division between concepts and objects, or the subject/object relationship, that is rigorously dialectical. Concepts of harm arising from social life can be differentiated from forms of suffering while still maintaining a relationship to it through a process of mediation. This allows us to understand the ways in which theory has attempted to grasp the problem of harm through ever greater complexity and attempts at revision; this is the point at which we noted the discipline of International Studies as involved in a conversation, rather than espousing entirely original positions. Pushing beyond this, we can see that the relationship of the resulting concepts to the world is inadequate to the fullness of experience; a division which is both allows them to emerge and constitutes the *residuum* which serves to undermine their permanence in the face of historical change. The impulse toward the amelioration of harm in this case becomes the point at which any particular historically-delimited definition or understanding comes to be surpassed. The way in which one might approach this pressure cannot operate, in the Hegelian sense, through a refinement and synthetic attitude towards what is known, but rather through the 'weight' of the partially comprehended object, the preponderance of which can be felt only through its haunting of what appears to be given to us.[208] The achievement of Critical Theory, in this sense, is to undermine the way that *any* definition that we might put forward can perfectly encapsulate the concept of harm. Nonetheless, that IS continues to return to the problem of harm demonstrates its continuing adherence to that normative goal; rather than taking the 'easy way out' in defining harm away, it has maintained the concept of harm as a normative promise which pushes the discipline towards continuous adaptation to the changing object of suffering. This suggests that the threefold problematic is not a problem that can be answered, but rather one to be consistently reflected upon in order to maintain the vitality of the discipline's contribution to the problem of harm.

Despite the breadth of philosophical reflection that characterises the work of the Frankfurt School, a concern with how this related to the reality of social life consistently provided the grounds against which Critical Theory was to measure itself.[209] While simple

[208] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 183.

[209] Indeed, one critique of the work of the early Frankfurt School was the way in which they maintained a theoretical framework which had been developed in the context of totalitarianism and Nazism. A possible counter to this argument, and one that is implicitly developed throughout this thesis, is the manner in which the

theory-testing was not embraced, the varied work that was conducted using fairly traditional methods by members of the Institute certainly helped to modify and alter Critical Theory.[210] Indeed, while the relationship between theory and fact was the subject of debate, it was broadly the case that facts provided by survey and empirical investigation could be understood as a way of illuminating the broader totality of which they were a part.[211] This element of totality indicates the extent to which the Institute considered itself subject to its own practical injunction for philosophy to be 'a part of the philosophical and religious attempts to reinsert hopeless individual existence once again into the womb or – to speak with Sombart – in the 'golden ground' of meaningful totalities.'[212]In this process, we can see a reflection of the debate-led attitude that International Studies holds toward the problem of harm in which approaches always operate in a broader disciplinary context. The 'reinsertion' of academic work in this regard is the point at which theory and practice become interchangeable, and through which the discipline's contribution to the problem of harm becomes manifest in broader social life. However, for Critical Theory, this process is not a straightforward positive contribution, but rather becomes part of the process of rationalisation through which the concepts produced in social science might contribute further to practices of domination.

The often sweeping statements by members of the Institute, including the dark and seemingly pessimistic prognostications of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can be understood as tentative but totalising in a manner that attempted to reflect historical conditions in which the Holocaust and the Atomic bomb were within living memory. Adorno's rigid adherence to epistemological investigation in a context where technology was both contributing to higher standards of life and becoming ever more destructive can in this regard be seen in his remarkably consistent impulse toward thinking with and against concepts, rather than attempting to explode them altogether.[213] This strategy rests on the belief that intellectual effort is capable of discerning broader trends and possibilities in social life by abstracting from the irreducible nature of individual suffering. If this is true then the critical theorist, in engaging with concepts, has the role of redeeming the value that concepts such as harm hold for social life. While Adorno would consistently hold on to the possibility of truth in concepts

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critique of extremes is the critique of tendencies that may or may not become actualised, but nonetheless lie at the core of what it means to live under one set of structures and conditions and not another.

[210] Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, 200.

[211] For Adorno's approach to facts, see Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 19–20.

[212] Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, 199.

[213] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, xx.

even if one were to happen on it accidentally, he would portray the triumphalism of Hegel – who claimed to *know* that this had been reached – as willing toward process of domination. It is the act of positing such a definition as a whole, immune to reflection and revision, which was the ultimate form of identity thinking and which could not bear out in history.[214] The concept of totality, which indicates that society should be considered as a whole, does not automatically lead to the idea that it can be understood; rather, it operates as a normative injunction which prevents us from claiming absolute validity for our concepts.

In highlighting the relationship between historical change and the recognition of suffering in Critical Theory, we are able to clarify the threefold problematic that is its characteristic form of engagement in IS. While we have argued that IS persistently engages with the problem of harm as a core concern, the more general arguments that characterise Critical Theory in the discipline are often articulated in terms that do not feature the characteristic preoccupation with suffering that we have seen in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer. In showing the starting point of these arguments to be a concern with finitude and human suffering, we have therefore attempted to demonstrate that the problem of harm forms an irreducible element of the role that Critical Theory has played in debates more widely. In this sense, it clarifies the way in which the critical theorists understood the role of concept-formation and revision to be deeply intertwined with an ethical stance toward the world through which they might contribute to the amelioration of harmful practices and forms of social organisation. This intertwined nature can be understood in terms of the threefold problematic:

- The problem of object adequacy: In arguing that suffering was the condition of all truth, Adorno tied the production of knowledge the problem of harm by placing the value of concepts in relation to their ability to express the experience of suffering subjects. This means that in working toward more object-adequate concepts, Critical Theory simultaneously works toward a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of suffering that has its corollary in the problem of harm.
- The problem of critical value: In placing the value of concepts in their ability to express suffering, Critical Theory highlights the way in which their practical upshot consists of their utility in recognising, addressing and ameliorating suffering in social life; the process that we have put forward as the problem of harm.

[214] Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 40–41.

- The problem of reflexivity: In emphasising the work of philosophy and social science as a process, rather than as simply providing answers, Critical Theory highlights ways in which concepts become inadequate and are revised in turn. More particularly, it also brings to light the idea that theory *is* a practice; to the extent that concepts become static or reified, they have the potential to contribute to the continuation of suffering.

For Critical Theory, these relationships are not incidental, but express a deeper relationship between the necessity of thought and the suffering of subjects that arises from the deeply normative nature of social life. In this way, we can consider the kind of work done in IS to be faced with *demands* arising from its position in relation to suffering. The activity we engage in when we address the problem of harm is, therefore, explanatory and ethical at the same time. It is explanatory because we seek to account for the various ways in which suffering is caused and perpetuated, and ethical because it is targeted at a change of behaviour that is held as a promise by the concept itself. More generally, the problem of reflexivity raises the possibility that these explanatory-ethical accounts can themselves be suffused with the asymmetry that is associated with social relations; they have tendencies and affinities with regard to distributions of power. The question of how the social scientist should orient themselves to the problem of harm articulated in this fashion is one that is characterised by this close relationship between suffering and the production of knowledge. However, while allowing us to better understand what is at stake in the problem of harm, the persistent negation that was characteristic of Critical Theory takes us to the very limit of what is possible in epistemology.

Chastened Identity

The dynamics that Critical Theory identified suggests that in examining the historical development of concepts, it may be possible to develop new ones that are better able to express the experience of suffering subjects. However, this process has a second aspect; concepts have a general tendency to contribute to patterns of instrumental control. This means that gains in our ability to address the problem of harm simultaneously arise the possibility that the discipline might contribute to its continuation. For Critical Theory, this rests on equivalence as the fundamental property that characterises conceptual thought. This problem can be seen in the concept of harm; in generalising the particularities of suffering

into a form that can be communicated and act as a grounds for explanation and solidarity, we abandon the historical specificity of suffering that is, from the perspective of Critical Theory, irreducible. It is this reduction of differences of kind to differences of quantity that is key to technical thought and measurement, allowing us to solve particular problems while remaining blind to others. The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* suggests that we can understand this as a property of abstraction:

> "The blessing that the market does not enquire after one's birth is paid for by the barterer, in that he models the potentialities that are his by birth on the production of the commodities that can be bought in the market. Men were given their individuality as unique in each case, different to all others, so that it might all the more surely be made the same as any other. […] Abstraction, the tool of enlightenment, treats its objects as did fate, the notion of which it rejects: it liquidates them."[215]

The role of Critical Theory in this context is to act as a constant reminder of the irreducibility of suffering in the face of the appropriating power of concepts. It is at this point that formulating the threefold problematic purely as a set of problems for knowledge production becomes inadequate; it is the way that these issues relate to suffering that is the real issue for attempts to engage with the problem of harm. However, in placing such a high value on the normative significance of suffering, each aspect of the threefold problematic is accentuated to an extreme degree. Ultimately, this leads to an understanding of the problem of harm as a demand that is to be redeemed in full, or not at all.

In the case of this all-or nothing strategy, the problem of object adequacy serves to highlight the experience of suffering as essentially unreachable, but furthermore becomes framed in such a way that suggests that any failure to reach such an impossible goal is nothing other than a betrayal of the promise that the problem of harm holds. Rather, philosophical reflection subsumes social scientific activity such that the problem of reflexivity – of exorcising authoritarian and violent tendencies – becomes the only possible activity for those who reflect on the nature of suffering. Moreover, it does so without any guarantee of success. This, naturally, entirely precludes the redemption of critical value due to the hopeless specificity of suffering and the potentially violent consequences of

[215] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 13.

intervention. This framing, needless to say, forces us to understand the problem of harm in such a way that the potential contribution that social science could make in this area becomes almost entirely unworkable. Indeed, the consequence is that very little of the problem of harm remains at all.

The relentless manner in which Adorno investigated ways to balance these commitments would push through the various layers of epistemology, leading to his circumscription of irreducible suffering through a process of repeatedly negating the social element of concepts. This was aimed at recovering the germ – the truth content – of the non-identity of suffering such that its emphatic promise could be maintained.[216] The culmination of Critical Theory lies in this critique of identity, under which philosophy both can't and must go on.[217] On the basis that we are unable ever to resolve the gulf between concepts of harm and the experience of suffering, engagement with the problem of harm in IS is hopeless in an all but absolute sense. While it may be possible to negate existing understandings in order to work toward more adequate concepts of harm, acts of definition serve the perpetuation of suffering to the same extent that they work against it.

The Dialectic of Enlightenment in Historical Context

The pessimism of Adorno and Horkheimer leads us to a point where it may seem rational to abandon the problem of harm entirely. This, however, would not allow us any understanding of how the discipline might engage with it more productively. The historical context of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, we suggest, provides a further perspective which allows us to make the most of the insights that Critical Theory provides while keeping the desperation of its authors in perspective. This begins with an acknowledgement that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* does not exhaust the contribution that Critical Theory can make; this much is clear from the two threads of the school that follow from the work of Adorno and Marcuse.[218] The culmination of Adorno's work with the necessity of persistent negation

[216] Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 97.

[217] Adorno was admiring of Beckett, with whose work he was familiar. Terry Eagleton, 'Determinacy Kills: Theodor Adorno', *London Review of Books*, accessed 27 August 2015.

[218] While Marcuse had become something of an intellectual mentor to the revolts of 1968, Adorno famously refused the positive moment of association that would come with allying with any particular movement. The decisive moment, when he called the police in order to suppress the disruption of his classes, is often considered as his final turn away from the call for practical political action and his embracing of an introspective and aesthetic philosophy that would wait in hope for a revolutionary moment that would not arrive. For the letters

clearly leads to a sense of precarity that overwhelms the possibility of an emancipatory outcome, and thus the practical utility of a normative core to social science. In this regard, reflexivity overwhelms the possibility of critical value. Correspondingly, the willingness of Marcuse to ally himself with the student movement and the revolts of 1968 demonstrated the possibility of philosophy's practical involvement with political and social movements. However, the appropriation of this movement into lifestyles and commodified social activity undermined the long-term or revolutionary impact that was intended. The 'Great Refusal', while inspirational to activists that took their inspiration from Marcuse's work, failed to create a new solidarity that was capable of refusing the temptations of capitalist social order despite the best of intentions.[219]

These consequences can be seen as illuminating the possibility that social scientific work, despite being driven by motivations such as the problem of harm, can come to be *subsumed* under the broader auspices of social life, particularly capitalism. The resulting falls short of the promise held out by harm as an emphatic concept, but are susceptible to co-optation, only partially fulfilling the normative content they hold out. The work of Adorno and Marcuse can be seen as two sides of the same coin, with Adorno operating with the pessimism that comes with a high level of generality, and Marcuse retaining his positive focus by working through the contradictions of daily social life in its more particular guise. The viability of Critical Theory depended on them both being present; a conclusion that is often omitted by the focus placed on the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Negative Dialectics* in which the possibility of positive social action is precluded.[220] Adorno's focus on the self-destruction of the Enlightenment seems to miss the converse side of its own argument – that there lies, in the processes of daily social life, points at which the possibility of this promise come to life and are accentuated. The impossibilities and demands that the void between suffering and the concept of harm present us with might tempt us to give up on the project of negotiating between the two, but the promise held out by the problem of harm, as it is present in social life, remains. It is, therefore, still important to consider how the problem of harm can be investigated at the level of empirical social science, a realm seemingly removed from

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between them, see 'Letters Between Adorno and Marcuse Debate 60s Student Activism', *Critical-Theory*. For an introduction: Esther Leslie, 'Introduction to Adorno/Marcuse Correspondence.', *New Left Review*, 1999.

[219] Marcuse considers the power of refusal as 'the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period.' Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 257.

[220] The extent to which Marx's 'technocratic moment', through which the contradictions of Capital would be elevated to the state of revolutionary possibility, remains a question of the necessary stage of the productive apparatus is a question still being asked today.

Adorno's highly abstract 'ontology of the wrong state of things'.[221] In doing so, we can begin to examine the ways that more concrete investigations of the problem of harm found in IS operate in light of the formulation put forward by Critical Theory. Such an effort is aimed at examining the implications of the tension put forward in this chapter, and understanding the productive tensions that arise in the shadow of Critical Theory's pessimistic speculative history.

One reason to continue the work of Critical Theory in light of the problem of harm is due to the susceptibility of their optimism or pessimism to the critiques that the Frankfurt School themselves levelled at Marx; the proscriptions that followed the philosophical analyses of the *Institute* are, in many ways, historically delineated.[222] Such critiques aim at chastening the almost theological fervour with which Adorno and Horkheimer focussed on the fact of suffering and which informed the constellation of the threefold problematic they employed. While arguing that it was necessary to maintain a link between the methods of his forebears and concrete investigation such as sociology, Honneth would qualify the arguments of the early Frankfurt School as providing potentially 'world disclosing' arguments that necessitate our viewing the polemic arguments of Adorno and Horkheimer through a historical lens. In embedding their normative focus prior to any particular investigation, he argued, their ability to abstract and exaggerate was a key strategy in evoking a normative response. It is not that their accounts needed to be empirically true, but normatively valid concerns, thus allowing them to open 'new horizons of meaning within which it can show the extent to which given circumstances have a pathological character.'[223] In this context, we can understand *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a cautionary text that reveals the darkest tendencies of modern life beyond their particular manifestations.

In some respects, this way of thinking about the possibility of critical engagement has been justified by work that has also, but to a less extreme degree, sought to understand political extremes such as Fascism as a political outcome that is intrinsically tied to the patterns of domination that are facilitated by the development of capitalism and

[221] Cited in Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (Psychology Press, 1998), 212.
[222] See Habermas' assessment of the ideas put forward by Adorno and Horkheimer as 'black' theorists of the bourgeoisie: Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, New Edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 106.
[223] Axel Honneth, 'The Possibility of a Disclosing Critique of Society: The Dialectic of Enlightenment in Light of Current Debates in Social Criticism', Constellations 7, no. 1 (1 March 2000): 118.

individualism.[224] As we saw in the introduction, the periodic extremes of social development and the harm that it produces have become increasingly more evident, despite the way in which liberals have neglected the harm that can be produced by social structure.[225] Events such as numerous financial crises, the development of a world order in which new drugs are produced according to the whim of the market, nuclear proliferation and the disasters at Chernobyl and Fukushima were understood in Critical Theory as internally related outcomes of a conceptual paradigm that accepts economic growth and confrontational power structures as the normal order of things in international politics and the global economy. The world disclosing power of Critical Theory attempts to explain and reveal such tendencies in a way that is sensitive to the violence that can be done by fixed conceptual apparatuses. It does so, however, in a manner which is less practical than it is aesthetic, presenting new challenges to theory due to the way in which avenues for meaning are opened up in particular cases.

However, it is also the case that the rejection of any particular solution to the problem of harm serves to undermine the credibility of general theorising itself. We have seen that Critical Theory removed many of the grounds from which a practical engagement with the problem of harm is possible. However, in a continuation of the pattern through which theory would be reassessed historically, from Kant to Hegel and onto Marx and the Frankfurt School, Habermas' later contribution attempted to bypass this problem by putting forward the argument that progress in the sphere of communication could be discerned in the liberal development of the welfare state and the public sphere.[226] Theoretically, this proceeded from a critique of the Frankfurt School's focus on the sphere of labour, which he argued overwhelmed the drive toward truth that was inherent in communication. In this, he re-opened the possibility of moral development within communication communities, and thus the idea that we saw throughout the discipline of International Studies: that it is the conversation, not the concept, which matters in the ethical stance taken by social science. If this is the case, then an examination of his framework allows us to situate the forms of knowledge that are produced by such interventions.

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[224] Bauman's influential assessment of the link between modernity and the holocaust can be understood as articulating their relationship in a sociological vein. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, New Edition (Polity Press, 1991).

[225] Pemberton finds considerable support for the idea that indifference, rather than intention, may be the source of some of the most prevalent forms of harm. Simon Pemberton, 'A Theory of Moral Indifference: Understanding the Production of Harm by Capitalist Society', in *Beyond Criminology: Taking Harm Seriously* (Pluto Press, 2004), 69.

[226] Jurgen Habermas, 'The Transformation of the Public Sphere's Political Function', in *The Habermas Reader* (Polity Press, 1996).

Habermas and the Consensual Truth of Moral Change

While there is little room to discuss Habermas' considerable oeuvre here, the trajectory of his work highlights the recursive nature by which theory is able to reflect on itself in attempts to find new avenues for the development of concepts.[227] Habermas proposed that the faculty of communication provided a means through which human subjects could understand each other as sharing fundamental interests in moral change; this would present an *inherent interest and* capacity in considering the problem of harm in an open fashion. This, as we shall see, can be understood as important to Linklater's later interrogation of the problem of harm in the discipline of IS. This operated as a transcendental analysis that would locate the moral truth of accounts in their intersubjective nature, rather than in abstraction as a form of alienated social labour; an analysis that he termed universal pragmatics.[228] While he acknowledged the importance of system integration, through which society was able to reproduce itself in terms of socially necessary labour, social integration serves to manufacture consensus based on the shared communicative interest in truth, rightness and truthfulness.[229]

For this to be the case, it is necessary to demonstrate the manner in which efforts at reflexivity can be ascertained intersubjectively and overcome the problematic limits imposed by the positioned and historical nature of knowledge production. Habermas characterised this through his study of the bourgeois public sphere, which he understood as an attempt to isolate free discussion and consensus building from the forces of systemic rationalisation.[230] On this model, it was possible for a communicatively agreed consensus to reign in the excesses of the system through a communicatively achieved consensus focussed on patterns of restraint in social action. In this regard, such consensuses can be seen as the basis for harm conventions. This form of knowledge formation is characterised as emancipatory by Habermas because it is derived from a different interest to that of science or interpretation. His three forms of human interest: empirical-analytic, historical-hermeneutic and emancipatory are drawn from

[227] His assessment of the development of modern philosophy can be found in Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.
[228] Jurgen Habermas, 'What Is Universal Pragmatics?', in *The Habermas Reader* (Polity Press, 1996).
[229] Ibid., 131.
[230] Whether Habermas' resulting account overlooks the sociohistorical conditions of such transcendental faculties is a source of contention. See Nick Crossley, 'On Systematically Distorted Communication: Bourdieu and the Socio-Analysis of Publics', in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 92–93.

the various interests that active and reflexive subjects have in the world.[231] The empirical-analytic function found in the various forms of what we have come to know as science are limited due to the now familiar critique of positivism; the struggle to dominate nature as was found in the work of the early Frankfurt School. The historical-hermeneutic interest operates as a veiled extension of this possibility, acknowledging positionality while still attempting to derive some degree of generalisation in support of the first.[232] While seeking to acknowledge the importance of historical conditioning, it nonetheless attempts to taxonomise these determinations in what amounts to an extension of the scientific attitude towards the naturalised condition of human subjects in their many times and localities.

The third form, however, recognises and seeks to transcend the limitations of particularity based on the reflexive acknowledgement of fundamental commonalities between varying forms of life. In this, we find a drive toward the kind of cosmopolitan outcomes that would not distinguish between insiders and outsiders in formulating harm conventions. Located beyond instrumental control, the aim is to outline the construction of a situation in which the interest in normative development such as a harm principle can be bought to the fore. In a transcendental fashion, Habermas attempts to lay out what might be the case for such a situation to be possible by retreating from the individual as the site of moral development and a focus on intersubjective communication. This 'ideal speech situation' is the regulative ideal through which we can aim at a transcendence of particularistic forms of thinking. Utilising the metaphor of psychoanalytic therapy, Habermas demonstrates the way in which the collective denaturalisation of social conditions could operate as a force for the collective reconstruction of rational forms of social practice.[233] The principle of reciprocity, through which Kant's subject would render universal only those principle under which she would live, is demonstrated to be the basis of a truly democratic and consensual decision making process that would maximise the responsiveness of concepts such as harm that Habermas' forebears had considered foreclosed.[234] Democracy and communication, therefore, offer the possibility of a social science that is both capable of engaging with the

[231] Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas* (Hutchinson, 1978), 55–56.
[232] Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, 316.
[233] For a discussion of the therapeutic metaphor in the context of democratic organisation, see Mark E. Warren, 'The Self in Discursive Democracy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 184.
[234] J. Donald Moon, 'Practical Discourse and Communciative Ethics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 151.

problem of harm and making sure that it is measured consistently against the empirical experience of subjects.

The Impracticality of Reason

Habermas, as is fitting for an inheritor of the Frankfurt School legacy, of course is sceptical that such an ideal situation could ever pertain in practice. There are two reasons for this to be the case that bear on our discussion. Firstly, the idealism of Habermas' procedural form of critique is not likely to pertain unless the conditions for its institution are already met by prevailing historical conditions – the problem we saw with his predecessors with regard to co-optation and subsumption under capital. In the context of a critical theory that is intended to orient itself toward the problem of harm, we need to examine reflexively the position that theory takes in the world; a position that is to some degree historically determined and path-dependent. Cutting more deeply than this, however, is the suggestion that undamaged life cannot be conceptualised by life that is already 'damaged' or alienated in the sense that Adorno would claim.[235] While Habermas would move away from the critique of alienation as grounds for extensive social critique, it nonetheless remains the case that an alienated existence is constitutive of that area of social action that is necessarily teleological and aimed toward the reproduction of society. That Critical Theory does not occupy such a position, and is able to comprehend a given historical situation in an object-adequate fashion, is by no means guaranteed. The practical implications of Habermas' theory thus rest on the dichotomy between the system and the lifeworld, critiques of which on the basis of exclusion have been decisive.[236] The thoroughgoing mediation of social relations that had been noted by the first generation of the Frankfurt School remains, described by Habermas in his concept of the 'colonisation' of the lifeworld.

[235] 'The living individual person, such as he is constrained to act and for which he was even internally molded, is as *homo oeconomicus* incarnate closer to the transcendental subject than the living individual he must immediately take himself to be. […] They are deformed at the outset by the mechanism that was then philosophically [in idealism] transfigured into the transcendental.' Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (Columbia University Press, 2005), 248.

[236] For an example, from the point of gender, see Nancy Fraser, 'What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender', *New German Critique*, no. 35 (1 April 1985): 97–131. For a consideration of his work in terms of green theory with regard to the potential of social movements, see Robyn Eckersley, 'Habermas and Green Political Thought: Two Roads Diverging', *Theory and Society* 19, no. 6 (1 December 1990): 742.

Despite the internal consistency of Habermas' argument, the contention regarding his theoretical apparatus is most apparent at the point where the system and the lifeworld intersect, and thus the way in which the form of engagement that we understand as the problem of harm is guided or determined by imperatives toward social reproduction. While he identifies a democratic situation in which we might cooperate to better understand the problem of harm, this only seems to work if Critical Theory occupies a social space that is able to transcend in some regards the imperative toward the rationalisation of knowledge production along the lines of system integration. Indeed, Habermas' reformulation of the principles of rationalisation bears significant parallels to that of his predecessors in accounting for social change:

> "Capitalism is defined by a mode of production that not only poses this problem [that of the constant development of productive forces] but also solves it. It provides a legitimation of domination which is no longer called down from the lofty heights of cultural tradition but instead summoned up from the base of social labour. The institution of the market, in which private property owners exchange commodities […] promises that exchange relations will be and are just owing to equivalence."[237]

Habermas considers the beginning of modernisation as the point at which traditional patterns of legitimation, the beginning of patterns of domination, lose their power '*as* myth, *as* public religion, *as* customary ritual, *as* justifying metaphysics, *as* unquestionable tradition.'[238] As such, a process of rationalisation is able to take place based on an immanent logic that may not be sensitive to something as basic as the problem of harm, but obeys its own functional imperatives. Residual authority structures in the system of production and distribution are questioned on their contribution to the achievement of such a logic, with the chastening effects of critique operating as a counter to this rather than an overcoming of such a logic itself. This may be understood as giving too much ground to the process of rationalisation over the area of normative concern.

The legitimate question would, then, appear to be the point at which this process of rationalisation ends and the process of intersubjective negotiation begins. Habermas

[237] Jurgen Habermas, 'Technology and Science as Ideology', in *The Habermas Reader* (Polity Press, 1996), 57.
[238] Ibid., 58.

considers this separation as a move away from Parsons, arguing that the systems-theory of societal reproduction could not be self-sufficient due to the way in which 'the components of the lifeworld are merely internal differentiations of this subsystem, which specifies the parameters of societal self-maintenance.'[239] Habermas demonstrated this process of separation in his study of the bourgeois public sphere, which served as a way in which rational debate and conversation could be conducted in a manner which was not restricted by the action imperatives of reproduction. In such a situation, it is argued, reflexive agents can arrive at a consensual basis from which to address the problems posed by society, including that of harm, in a way that takes into account the broadest possible array of dialogic claims toward an idea of truth that holds ethical content.

However, the sociological account that describes how this might be the case is not at all clear. Habermas' functionalism with regard to modes of system integration appears to be acceptable in the context of a socially integrative bourgeois public sphere, but appears to merely register protest against historical situations in which such a free dialogic situation is not present. With regard to this possibility, Habermas proceeds to a thesis through which the lifeworld can be 'colonised' by the system in a manner which serves to undermine attempts at their separation.[240] In an important respect, therefore, we find that despite Habermas' success in putting forward some moral basis for critique, he encounters the problem of historical conditions at the same point as did the sanguine analysis put forward by Adorno and Horkheimer. In short, the search for an 'authentic' form of communication that is characteristic of the idea of social science as a sphere of debate becomes increasingly impeded by the mounting problem that communication too operates in an already-existing nexus of power/knowledge relationships.

Despite Habermas' attempted grounding of Critical Theory, his formulation falls subject to critiques that are able to demonstrate the way in which his analysis is, in turn, historically grounded such that it privileges particular forms of social organisation such as liberalism. The persistence of the problems that Critical Theory has presented, then, points us once again toward the importance of empirical investigations into the problem of harm so that

[239] Jurgen Habermas, 'Uncoupling of System and Lifeworld', in *The Habermas Reader* (Polity Press, 1996), 278.

[240] Jurgen Habermas, 'Weber's Theory of Modernity', in *The Habermas Reader* (Polity Press, 1996), 276–77. John S. Dryzek, 'Critical Theory as a Research Program', in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 102. Nancy S. Love, 'What's Left of Marx', in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 55.

we might better ground the concerns raised by philosophy. This places great weight on our ability to investigate the species of historical situation that Habermas considers as raising the problem of internal colonisation, and to do this in an object-adequate fashion. In the context of social science, Habermas' formulation of critical value and reflexivity can be seen as operating in a way that neglects the problem of object adequacy through which we might better understand the social structures and tendencies that characterise the lived experience of the problem of harm. As was the case with the first generation of the Frankfurt School, the problem of a 'totally administered society' in which forms of domination may not be apparent raises the question of whether critique is immediately prefigured by the structural and historical situation and its implications for the subject/object relationship, thus colonising our conceptual frameworks.[241]

Conclusion: The Problem of Harm in the Context of Modernity

In presenting a reading of Critical Theory that is focussed on the implications it has for the problem of harm, this chapter has argued that the Frankfurt School allows us to understand the concept of harm as only partially accounting for the experience of suffering to which it often refers. This suggests that from the perspective of Critical Theory, a key challenge posed by the problem of harm for International Studies lies in the problems that arise from our attempts to produce knowledge of it. In particular, such arguments force us to renegotiate the grounds from which we are able to claim normative knowledge or provide answers to the various aspects of the threefold problematic with any certainty, and that this rests on our ability to comprehend social life.[242] In this light, the problems posed by instrumental knowledge production and changes in patterns of global interconnection are uncomfortable truths for a discipline that is at least partly constituted by attempts to explain and ameliorate the conditions of suffering in social life. If the discipline is to contribute to the

[241] Coles argues that the discrepancy between particular and general for Adorno is 'an *ineliminable characteristic* for our inscription in this world […] on Adorno's reading, our relations appear to be characterised as well by an elemental non-identity between general and particular that we cannot escape in toto.' Romand Coles, 'Identity and Difference in the Ethical Positions of Adorno and Habermas', in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30. This highlights the partial nature of Habermas' formulations – despite holding to a dialectical understanding of intersubjectivity, his approach to subject/object relations has only been partially formulated and tends toward a paradigm of instrumental action. See Thomas McCarthy, 'Rationality and Relativism: Habermas's "Overcoming" of Hermeneutics', in *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Macmillan, 1982), 76–77.

[242] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 16.

problem of harm as a site of contention and negotiation, then it is important for us to consider how it relates to these issues such that its engagement might be better characterised.[243]

Rather than the three strategies of contention we saw in the first chapter, Critical Theory holds out the historical continuation of suffering as the centre around which each of these issues rotate; the threefold problematic finds its vitality less in its naming of perennial scientific problems but in the way that suffering forces them to be considered as a whole. In doing so, the problem of harm offers both the opportunity for IS to engage in the amelioration of harmful practices, but also the possibility that it might fail or be complicit in their continuation. This is a complex task; the three problems are not individual lines of scientific development, but constitute an interconnected field of problems in which positions taken on one aspect have direct effects for how we might engage with the others. In addressing the problem of harm, approaches in IS need to formulate a response to the problems of object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity lest it neglect the complex demands that the problem of harm places on a discipline that is uniquely placed to address it.

These demands can be characterised through the lineage we have drawn from Marx to Adorno and onward, illustrating how social science might best account for social relations and structures that contribute to harmful outcomes. This rests on the argument that normative and social scientific claims – claims to critical value and object adequacy – are intertwined, and in addressing the causes of harm we might contribute to its amelioration. Critical Theory suggests that IS might serve as one avenue through which it is possible to formulate a critique of ideology or false consciousness; in holding up the experience of suffering as a common reference point, and explaining how it comes about, the discipline can aid in a process through which previously unacknowledged harmful practices are brought within the sphere of ethical concern. In this context, the priority that Critical Theory places on the experience of suffering provides us with a starting point from which we might begin to address more abstract forms of harm.

A further important argument lies in the way that social scientific work fulfils a reflexive function, seeking to articulate and reassess the qualities of the historical situations that it is directed toward. In this regard, the critical theorists sought to juxtapose the promise inherent in concepts such as harm with the actuality of the situation; on their terms, it is increasingly possible to address the problem of harm in an adequate fashion, but history

[243] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 4.

develops in the direction of ever-greater means of destruction and suffering. The constant return to the problem of harm in IS demonstrates a similar reflexive and utopian element – it promises, even if it does not fulfil, the possibility of an ethically engaged social science. However, it is no longer the case that we can, like Marx, consider the proletariat as the historical subject at the centre of our approach. In broadening a concern with exploitation to the experience of suffering, Critical Theory provides a theoretical basis for developments in the discipline that seek to expand ethical concern to marginalised groups and the environment, among others. This strategy, which underpins many of the strategies of contention that we saw in the last chapter, rests on the identification of a gulf between harm and suffering that social science can contribute to narrowing. In characterising IS in this role, Critical Theory suggests that the problem of harm constitutes a historical task through which different approaches in the discipline can be considered as part of a broader process aimed at opening up harmful practices to ethical consideration.

In prioritising suffering, however, Critical Theory suggests that solidarity around our failures to address it might be a more reliable goal than rallying around positive aims. Suffering, in this case, provides a common reference point for criticism more than it identifies positive opportunities for social change. If this is the case, then we can understand the concept of harm to be the *social appropriation* of suffering; it is this appropriation which underpins our ability to engage with and alleviate harmful practices. Nevertheless, this move is an ambiguous one, as we are forced to consider how harm and suffering are never fully identical. This principle of non-identity, particularly in the work of Adorno, leads us to a suspicion of social life as in some way fundamentally *wrong* due to the failure of the normative promise that concepts such as harm contain.

However, such a persistent focus on the possibility of pain and suffering leaves little ground for meeting halfway; any attempt to move beyond it is immediately subject to ruthless criticism that rests on the violence that may result and does not allow us to consider the problematic but necessary way in which harm conventions come about. The consequence of the almost theological fervour with which the Frankfurt School regarded suffering precluded any positive contribution to the problem of harm in wider social life, leading them instead to focus on a pessimistic philosophy of history characterised by the rampage of subjective reason. While such an approach maintained suffering as a core concern, it places the critical value of social scientific work in a highly ambiguous position due to the inevitable failure that accompanies our attempts at explanation. Nonetheless, the essential insights of Critical

Theory remain valuable. In presenting a viewpoint from the perspective of some of the most horrifying events of the 20th Century, the work of Adorno, Horkheimer and others present us with a list of demands upon International Studies' engagement with the problem of harm that are, in many ways, commensurate with the historical mission that it has set itself. By addressing the implications that these arguments have for International Studies more broadly, we aim to examine how these might best be met.

Having put forward the key dynamics that Critical Theory associated with suffering in social life, and thereby the problem of harm, we can now attempt to examine how their insights bear on work conducted in International Studies. The task is to consider how the discipline might respond to the implications of Critical Theory, and how it might best sustain the way in which it conceives of the problem of harm. In this context, the work of Linklater provides the best example, formulating a sociological approach to the problem of harm in IS while simultaneously attempting to maintain the normative concern that arises from Critical Theory.

Chapter 3 – Harm and Critique in the Sociology of Andrew Linklater

Introduction

In the first chapter, we saw how Critical Theory lends a perspective on the problem of harm that is characterised by three interconnected problems for knowledge production, and that its contribution to debates centred on the problem of harm lay in its ability to open up space for normative engagement and reflexivity. In returning to the roots of Critical Theory, the second sought to better characterise the threefold problematic by demonstrating its basis in the distinction between the experience of suffering and concepts of harm. This implies that engagement with the problem of harm in International Studies is fraught with difficulties that centre on the production of knowledge; our concepts of harm are unlikely ever to fully account for the normative demands that suffering puts forward. Nonetheless, in attempting to maintain the promise that the concept of harm holds, Critical Theory suggests that it remains essential that we do so. Furthermore, we saw in the first chapter that the problem of harm remains a source of vitality in the discipline, driving it toward new innovations and developments in the analysis of world politics. This ambiguity, we suggest, is at the core of Critical Theory's contribution to how we understand the problem of harm as simultaneously a site of vital importance and of potential failure.

Despite their negative approach to the possibilities that concepts such as harm can open up, the critical theorists nonetheless considered the continuation of suffering as a key drive toward the continuation of social scientific work. Having understood some of the implications of Critical Theory for our understanding of the problem of harm, we will now engage with the work of Andrew Linklater, whose sociology of harm conventions provides the best example of explicit engagement with the explanation of, and critical engagement with, harmful practices in International Studies. The aim is to examine Linklater's work in light of the contribution that Critical Theory makes to our understanding of the various aspects of the problem of harm. Our argument that there is a contribution to be made in this area finds support in the work of Linklater himself, who suggests that sociological research

need not be alienated from the kind of normative concern found in Critical Theory.[244] If this is the case, then Linklater's sociological account of harm conventions may provide a way of sustaining the pressures that that threefold problematic gives rise to.

In addressing the work of Linklater, we are considering the sociology of harm conventions in light of, and as a response to, the hopeless attitude that the critical theorists held. This response is based on an empirical investigation into the history and development of the problem of harm. Drawing on the disciplines of Jurisprudence, Ethics, Historical Sociology, International Studies and Critical Theory, Linklater's *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations* attempts to ground a broad conception of harm upon the idea of historically shared vulnerabilities in a way which has affinities to the work of the Frankfurt School.[245] Its core proposal – that a sociological approach to the forms that harm has taken can provide an explanation of the way in which individuals and groups negotiate the tension between the ability to harm and visions of society – is put forward as a demonstration of the importance of international relations to the discipline of Historical Sociology, a field which has often neglected its importance.[246] The aim in this chapter is to consider how he carries through on these commitments, and how this reflects on the threefold problematic that is Critical Theory's key contribution to the way we understand the problem of harm through object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity. In light of this, we can consider how Linklater's investigation of concrete historical processes negotiates the difficulties that arise from the emphasis on suffering that Critical Theory argued for.

The chapter proceeds in two main sections. The first of these, harm and harm conventions, summarises Linklater's approach to the problem of harm, his normative stance and his case for historical sociology as a way for studying it. This concludes with an argument for the importance of addressing social ontology as a way of understanding *what is talked about* in sociological investigation. This is taken up in the second section, which considers Linklater's effort with a focus on its roots in process sociology grounded on the work of Norbert Elias. While agreeing with the attempt to address the development of the problem of harm historically, it argues that Elias' understanding of scientific change and development serves to restrict the insights that Critical Theory bought to bear on the

[244] Andrew Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations*, 1st Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 23.
[245] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*. The remaining two volumes have yet to be published.
[246] Linklater, 'Norbert Elias, the Civilizing Process and the Sociology of International Relations', 160.

relationship between knowledge and suffering. These include foundational elements of the accounts that we saw in the last chapter, including ideas of the subject/object relationship and social structure which are significant despite important similarities between the two perspectives. If this is the case, then we are left with an uncertain model of how the social sciences relate to the knowledge of harm that they are involved in producing; while Linklater notes the importance of this problem, it is important to clarify these if we are to understand the threefold problematic as an interconnected, rather than separate, set of issues as Critical Theory suggests we should.

Our engagement with Linklater's work suggests that while the impulse toward a study of the historical nature of harm conventions holds out interesting possibilities for understanding debates centred on the problem of harm, it fails to develop the normative implications of this knowledge. With this in mind, the chapter concludes with a proposal for the reconstruction of the sociology of harm conventions that takes into account developments in the philosophy of science and which may allow us to better account for the threefold problematic and its interconnections. This approach, it is argued, will serve to negotiate the normative impulse of Critical Theory with the empirical contribution found in the work of Linklater, thus formulating a more adequate response to the problems that harm raises for International Studies.

a) Harm and Harm Conventions

The Role of the Harm Principle

While Linklater's sociological method is not based on rigidly defining what does and what does not count as harm, he attempts to approximate the concept in social life as a starting point by examining the extent to which conceptions of harm can be said to be immanent to all societies. Thus we find:

> 'No society – not even the most cruel or violent – can survive unless most people internalize the principle that they should not inflict unnecessary harm on other members. Elementary socialization processes that equip infants with an awareness of how

> their actions can harm other persons as independent centres of experience exist in all societies.'[247]

Some form of socially-embedded harm principle or convention, he argues is a permissive condition for the endurance of any form of society over time. However, this cannot be considered as an *a priori* fact. It must first be negotiated and built upon, as well as being inculcated in individuals through a process of socialisation. This demonstrates a sociological approach to the maintenance of civil society against the state of nature, a motif which is common to liberal political philosophy.[248] Rather than posing a hypothetical framework as the social contract theorists did, Linklater is proposing an investigation of the work that goes into maintaining these principles historically in order to move past the idealism, and thus the exclusionary potential, of such philosophical approaches.

Under Linklater's formulation, some form of harm principle is immanent to all societies, and those that demonstrate lower levels of violence may be said to be, in general, more restrained than those that demonstrate higher levels of violence.[249] However, the particular forms of conduct that are restrained vary considerably in different times and in different places; in particular, it is worth noting that the lack of central authority in the international sphere ensures that harm principles, and thus forms of restraint, are somewhat limited at that level.[250] In examining the way in which these processes occur, it may be possible to locate some common ground for solidarity between groups based on common experiences of pain, humiliation and suffering which could serve to move past these

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[247] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 29.

[248] The liberal political theory tradition is notable for its reliance on a speculative original position, particularly in the social contract theories of Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke. In these examples, a posited position and relation between people, and a further relationship between them and nature, is utilised as a point from which to develop the hypothetical social contract, from which they would move from the position of men to that of citizens. The work of contemporary justice theorists, perhaps most importantly John Rawls, begins from these theoretical antecedents. Rawls' negotiation of this tradition can be found in John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[249] See *Civilization and its Discontents in* Sigmund Freud, *Civilization, Society and Religions: 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego', 'Future of an Illusion' and 'Civilization and Its Discontents'*, New Edition (Penguin Books Ltd, 1991). Elias' basis in Freudian psychology can be seen at the basis of this move, which Linklater discusses in terms of a social psychology. Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 207.

[250] This can be understood as an extension of Linklater's past work on the English School of International Studies, which has focussed on the principles underpinning conduct in the international sphere. For explicit links, see Andrew Linklater, 'The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Implications for the Sociology of States-Systems', in *Critical Theory and World Politics* (Routledge, 2007), 177.

divisions.[251] Moreover, developments in global politics toward a greater level of interconnectedness and interdependence may point toward the development of a global civilising process concerning particular forms of harm.[252] Here, Linklater is arguing for his sociological investigation to be a large-scale articulation of the problem of harm that we observed in Chapter 1; this would centre upon the citizen/humanity problem, which centres on the competing obligations between humanity and citizenry, as a core articulation of the problem of harm in the discipline.[253] Adopting a sociological method would allow us to gain empirical evidence concerning the importance of various harm principles, but also to address objections that consider the 'problem of harm' to be so vague as to be indeterminate.

Linklater, then, is not attempting to provide metaphysical justification for his conception of harm, but rather arguing that it is an anthropologically grounded feature of human society. This allows him to ground his argument on something more than the 'view from nowhere' that his earlier engagement with Critical Theory was so pivotal in critiquing.[254] Upon this basis, there are various forms of harm and suffering to which all of us are more or less vulnerable, making harm an experiential phenomenon, the immediate form of which does not have to be justified theoretically *a priori*. Linklater thus sidesteps the problem posed by the indeterminacy of the problem by subsuming it under an 'umbrella' concept that is socially embedded and evident, grounded in lived experience. Importantly for the problem of harm in society, this general concept can be communicated without a sophisticated labour of translation; following the work of Simone Weil, Linklater argues for 'emotional and expressive capacities that revolve around mutually intelligible concerns about the vulnerabilities of the body.'[255]

Appealing to suffering as a universal aspect of lived experience, Linklater draws close to the work of the early Frankfurt School that we saw in the previous chapter, appealing to the experiential content of suffering as the basis around which consensus can be negotiated. However, it is important to note that he draws out this consensus as not immediately precluded by the dictates of instrumental reason that plagued the Frankfurt School, placing

[251] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 40.
[252] Ibid., 41.
[253] This has been a consistent area of concern for Linklater and is clearly stated in his first book, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations.* See Linklater, *Men and Citizens*. With regard to harm conventions, see Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 76.
[254] See in particular Andrew Linklater (1992), 'The Question of the Next Stage in International Relations Theory: A Critical-Theoretical Point of View', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 21, no. 1: 77–98.
[255] Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"', 181.

emphasis on common affective capacities rather than their short-circuiting through processes of alienation. By beginning with the shared capacity for physical suffering, one can begin to develop a taxonomy of harms that vary according to the relationships involved; while physical pain may be found in the pre-social experience of nature, the understanding of harm and its variations can only be found in society. It is evident that no such taxonomy of harm can be timeless or absolute, but as an illustrative example, Linklater uses the following: [256]

- Deliberate harm
- Humiliation
- Unintended harm
- Negligence
- Exploitation
- Complicity
- Harm of omission
- Public harm
- Structural Harm

The extent to which these forms of harm and others are recognised varies from society to society. However, this taxonomy indicates the important point that forms of harm may be understood through the social links through which they operate, and thus rest on an understanding of what society *is* in the form of a social ontology. This moves beyond the immediate sensory experience of suffering, such as burning or starvation, and toward a socially mediated and intersubjectively ascertained vocabulary which is able to address the social nature of harm *as a problem.* While the general concept 'harm' may be vague, indicating the way in which the condition or experience has come about grants an explanatory power that moves beyond appeal to emotive sympathies and toward a degree of shared historical understanding of what is at stake. Thus deliberate harm comes to denote a harmful experience which is predicated upon the intention involved. Negligence, meanwhile, indicates that the refusal to assist constitutes a positive move to implicate another in a harmful situation where there was some prior obligation to assist those harmed. Exploitation

[256] See Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 51–60.

considers forms of harm that involve the instrumental use and abuse of an existing contractual obligation, and so on.[257]

While some forms of harm are readily recognised in many societies, others are not associated with the same moral weight. Moreover, the dynamics of a given society may tend toward forms of harm which cause suffering in subjects but which lie outside of established contexts to which the concept of harm pertains, thus being rendered 'accidents', 'externalities' or some other form rather than as a problem that is subject to open and critical negotiation. Indeed, in modern societies the rapid development of technology may seem to outstrip a corresponding development in critical and normative understanding. The social linkages of these forms of harm thus move beyond historically specific understandings of intention, which Linklater addresses through the distinction between concrete and abstract harm:

> 'Concrete harm involves the intention to make designated others suffer – most obviously, enemies in war. Abstract harm is caused by impersonal forces where people's intentions are less significant than the global structures and processes that push them to act in ways that harm others, though often unintentionally or because of indifference rather than malice.'[258]

The critical possibility that sociology holds out is the adaptation of the broader concept of harm to encompass the increasing complexity and form of social interactions over time as they become more embedded and abstract. As the form that harm takes changes, the emotional relationship and the way in which this is communicated to others also changes. At the highest level of abstraction for Linklater's taxonomy lies structural harm, or the claim that people are 'vulnerable to the ways in which they are tied together in lengthening social interconnections.'[259] Throughout history, then, Linklater is suggesting that there is a socially mediated vocabulary that is developed in order to communicate and negotiate the experiences and consequences of harm in society. Such a vocabulary develops in ways that may increase, decrease or alter the ways in which it is possible to communicate the experience of harm to another, and is dependent on core concepts such as intention, cause and affectedness that are

[257] Linklater's taxonomy of harm has grown over time, with the one used here being the one utilised in *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*. For this, see Ibid., 51. For an earlier version, see Linklater, 'The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Implications for the Sociology of States-Systems', 151.
[258] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 38.
[259] Ibid., 73.

at the centre of what we understand society to be. In this regard, we can see similar associations being made as in Critical Theory, where the form of the explanation is a key aspect of its moral force. However, at the core of this, for Linklater, is the essentially human balancing of interests between the freedom to do, and the injunction to minimise the harm done to others that he grounds upon common conditions of human vulnerability.

While it may not be possible to specify the ways in which this should be negotiated in advance, it is possible to argue for particular forms of the negotiation of harm conventions to be superior to others on the basis of their point of reference. While reductions in tax may reduce the immediate harm to an investor's profits, for instance, it may be at the expense of others that could have benefited from that tax revenue in the form of welfare programmes or other such benefits. Such decisions lead naturally to a historically placed notion of right that is socially mediated in order to resolve potential conflicts in notions of harm. While we may be hesitant to draw out developments such as human rights as definitively and immediately positive in terms of reducing overall levels of harm, considering these an empirical question, Linklater is able to claim that the forms of recognition that they embody may be superior to other forms on the basis of the way that they are inclusive of a broader array of suffering subjects.[260] In order to do this, he draws upon the ideal speech situation, developed by Jurgen Habermas, as a way of grounding the normative benefits that are granted by particular forms of society and thus to illustrate the *critical value* that arises from the sociology of harm conventions.[261]

As indicated above, the process of negotiating the harm principle is a social one, and as such the critique of this process can be based upon the way in which this negotiation occurred. Thus Linklater argues:

> 'On the basis of *tanget onmnes*, all people have an equal right to be represented in decision-making arenas, or in some way consulted about decisions that may affect them adversely; they are entitled 'to refuse or renegotiate offers', and to convey dissatisfaction with the larger political context in which decisions are made […]. The corollary is that the dominant institutions and practices should be

[260] Ibid., 110.
[261] Habermas' considerable oeuvre will not be analysed in depth here, and focus will be placed on the ideal speech situation as it occurs in Linklater's work. Ibid., 100.

> assessed by the extent to which they are answerable to all those who 'stand to be affected' by them.'[262]

The injunction to minimise the harm that we do to others is thus extended opportunities to anticipate it through discursive consensus formation. It is possible, then, for us to distinguish between harm conventions that are merely a representation of particular sectional interests, and those that may be considered emancipatory on the basis of whether or not they distinguish between insiders or outsiders in their process of negotiation and implementation. This is an important move beyond conventional state-based politics, where the pacification of internal borders between communities often leads to the elevation of this problem to a new level of abstraction such as between states or regions.[263]

With regard to applications to international politics, Linklater argues that such a distinction constitutes the essence of the difference between harm conventions and what he calls 'cosmopolitan' harm conventions, which are predicated upon their not distinguishing between insiders and outsiders.[264] Such harm conventions are not based on a cosmopolitan political project that advocates strong forms of global citizenship or the priority of humankind over particular communities, but rather on the belief that 'the differences between insiders and outsiders are not always relevant reasons for treating them in a different manner.'[265] Such an obligation requires the recognition that standard conceptions of bounded identity are not identical with those of moral responsibility. While the basis of Linklater's project focuses on harm conventions as a universal feature of real societies, cosmopolitan harm conventions move beyond this in that their adoption reveals the extent to which humanity is able to transcend particular societies in the process of moral deliberation. As such, and if harm conventions are a permissive feature of society, the development of cosmopolitan harm conventions may reveal the large scale negotiation of harm principles that could underpin evidence for a global civilizing process.[266]

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[262] *Tanget onmnes* refers to the Roman idea that 'what touches all must be agreed by all', and informed Kant's 'cosmopolitan maxim of personal conduct'. Ibid.

[263] Work regarding the relationship between internal and external borders has demonstrated the close link between the two. See Jef Huysmans, 'The European Union and the Securitization of Migration', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, no. 5 (1 December 2000): 751–77.

[264] Linklater, 'Citizenship, Humanity and Cosmopolitan Harm Conventions', 2007, 132.

[265] Andrew Linklater, 'Citizenship, Humanity and Cosmopolitan Harm Conventions', in *Critical Theory and World Politics* (Routledge, 2007), 132.

[266] The civilizing process here refers to changes in patterns of behaviour and restraint, and is discussed further below. Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 157.

The basis of Linklater's examination of a universal feature of social life allows him to develop this critical strategy at a near-universal level. The proposed universality of the harm convention is not based on the advocacy of a particular sectional interest but rather is located by abstracting away the particularities of individual experience in order to reveal the common core of harm as a problem in social life. It is not that every person would recognise the particular form of suffering that another is experiencing, but rather that the experience of suffering holds a universal element such that it can be expressed and recognised in a general sense. Therefore, while the content may differ, it is possible for Linklater to move from the common principle of suffering to the problem of harm as a general feature of society.[267] The negotiation of harm conventions that takes place throughout society becomes based on an essentially communicative form that allows for this negotiation takes place. The resulting development highlights Linklater's critical strategy; the ideal speech situation rests upon a core notion of affectedness as its empirical starting point, but differs in emphasis from the critical theorists by focussing on the recognition, as much as the the experience, of suffering. This sociological orientation – through which we might explain the harm conventions present in different societies – demonstrates a potential for critique based on the level of inclusiveness characterised in ideas of harm and which pushes societies to aspire to harm conventions that take on a cosmopolitan, rather than sectional, character.

Linklater's argument can be understood in critical-theoretical terms as follows. Firstly, the ability to generalise the problem of harm in social life, grounded upon shared vulnerabilities, provides the basis upon which it is possible to build a more general synthetic account of harm that encapsulates a wide variety of physical and emotional experiences. This provides a critical standard that bears strong similarities to Horkheimer and Adorno's concerns with the social mediation of suffering. In arguing for the universality of this process, the analyst of harm conventions can incorporate a wide variety of outcomes at different levels of analysis and investigate the broad and wide-ranging negotiations concerning the problem of harm in society, The harm principle provides a critical standard that allows the identification of harm conventions as a potential site for the fostering of more inclusive forms of political community. Such an account, as we have seen, is predicated on the actual accounts that the sociology of harm conventions is to produce, to which we now turn.

[267] While this transition will be complicated later, Linklater argues that there are aspects of this process that are sufficiently universal that they can take place through a relatively uncomplicated labour of translation. Ibid., 222–23.

The Sociology of Harm Conventions

The sociological focus of Linklater's account consists of an investigation of the way in which notions of harm have influenced and changed social interaction across history. Given the way in which societies rest on conventions concerning ethical issues, the possibility of a sociology of global morals arises which could inform our strategies of critique:

> 'The principal objective is to build on previous endeavours to construct a distinctive mode of comparative sociological analysis that examines the extent to which basic considerations of humanity have not only influenced the conduct of international relations in different historical eras but may yet acquire a central role in bringing unprecedented levels of global connectedness under collective moral and political control.'[268]

While in principle such a sociology could be applied to any normative concept, the foundational nature of harm conventions indicates that harm presents a potentially high level of critical value for such a project. It is not, however, the only necessary foundation stone for Linklater's cosmopolitan orientation. Moreover, such a project should not attempt to encompass or dominate its subject matter – the forms of harm that operate in society – and thus needs to remain open to reflexivity. *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, he stresses, is not a theory of harm, but rather an investigation of the problem of harm in society through a theoretical lens.[269] As such, he at no point claims that harm is *the* predominant problem, merely noting that 'the harm principle has an important role – no more than that – in any cosmopolitan ethic'.[270]

This involves less a theorisation of harm as such as a study of the way in which harm is dealt with and articulated in social interaction. The sociology of harm conventions is a way of examining the historically placed ways that the expression of harm occurs, and opens up a possibility of comparison and critique precisely because it is permissive towards what can be counted as harm:

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[268] Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"', 178.
[269] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, ix.
[270] Ibid., 77.

> "There is probably nothing more fundamental in social life than how people deal with the problem of harm in their relations with each other – how they protect themselves from the various forms of suffering to which they are susceptible by virtue of their mental and physical vulnerability, and how they deal with those who are prepared to kill, injure, exploit and in other ways harm them."[271]

The aim of the sociology of harm conventions is to provide an account of the processes by which the problem of harm is negotiated in society, and incorporates several elements. Firstly, it considers the ways that societies conceptualise the forms and causes of suffering as harmful, and how this occurs through communicative and power relations. Secondly, it examines the way in which this is maintained in society over time, and the way in which they are reflected back on social life through socialisation and processes of integration. The evaluative stance that Linklater argues for, in this context, serves to highlight ways in which such harm conventions can be rendered more inclusive in the way discussed above.

In order to develop the comparative perspective that would underpin such an evaluative process, Linklater draws on the process sociology of Norbert Elias. Particularly in *On the Process of Civilization*, Elias had developed a sociological method, indebted to Freud, which dealt in particular with the relationship between instincts, needs, and the way in which they were mitigated by the process of civilization as one of restraint.[272] The parallel with a sociology of harm conventions lies in that both attempt to address the way in which it is possible for emotional responses, whether disgust, shame or empathy, are fostered in the process of socialisation. At the level of society, both also attempt to understand the ways in which this socialisation process is subject to change. Linklater argues that relationships between societies played, unusually for sociological accounts, a significant role in the way that Elias understood the development of long-term patterns of social change, raising the contribution that IS can make to historical sociology.[273] A global sociology of harm conventions, then, can serve to overcome the false divide that has been instituted between sociology and international relations, as well as providing an empirical ground for areas of moral or ethical concern in the problem of harm.

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[271] Ibid., ix.
[272] Stephen Mennell, *Norbert Elias: An Introduction* (University College Dublin Press, 1998), 111.
[273] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, x.

Elias utilised the term 'civilising processes' in order to indicate the interconnected ways in which sociological and psychological change come about. Linklater considers this a:

> 'modern variant on a universal theme since no viable society is uncivilized in the sense of lacking conventions for regulating violent and non-violent harm, or socializing institutions that instil respect for basic standards of behaviour as well as the socially valued patterns of individual self-restraint and emotion management, or coercive mechanisms that can be brought into play when the mechanisms that deal with 'drive formation' fail to secure compliance with relevant norms.'[274]

The universal nature of civilizing processes highlights the way in which earlier concerns regarding the moral basis of society may be subject to social scientific analysis. Linklater finds Habermas' contention 'that the very first speech act contained the promise of the moral and political unity of humankind' at the normative core of the attempt to reveal the value of the civilizing process fully understood.[275] Furthermore, a focus on civilizing processes aids in understanding the way in which all societies are constantly vulnerable and susceptible to processes of change. No society can therefore be said to lie at 'the end of history,' or to have fully achieved the domination of nature but are constantly involved in efforts at civilisation of which the negotiation of harm conventions is an essential aspect.[276]

It is possible to see a convergence between the projects of Linklater and Elias in the latter's contention that with the European civilising process that he primarily focussed upon, some level of internal pacification had decreased the level of explicitly violent behaviour that was acceptable to society as a whole.[277] This was linked to patterns of state formation that reduced the necessity for individuals to rely on themselves for personal security. More abstractly, more complex chains of interconnectedness had increased the reliance of the ruling strata on those that provided the means of their survival, a phenomenon labelled 'functional democratisation'.[278] It is clear that the processes involved in such changes were not

[274] Ibid., 159.
[275] Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"', 185.
[276] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 163. The 'end of history' refers to Fukuyama's contentious thesis. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Re-issue Edition (London: Penguin, 2012).
[277] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 161.
[278] Ibid.

monocausal, but implicated in a complex relationship between agents, institutions and structures that varied according to power gradients and dynamics over time. Strict dualisms of structure and agency do not bear out in real life, and a more adequate explanation must be sought in the combination of micro and macro processes, materialist and idealist explanation, and psychological change.[279]

Despite the unfortunate choice of words in the term 'civilizing' processes, Linklater goes to great effort to indicate that there is not teleology involved in Elias' account.[280] Given that all societies engage in the civilizing, in some form, of their members, such changes are not unique to the societies that Elias examined in particular. The civilized condition denotes the self-image of having undergone such a process, the direction of which is in no way proscribed. Indeed, running counter to the development of civilizing processes are the decivilizing processes which accompany it. These are processes that run counter to civilizing processes but are nonetheless immanent to the extent that they are made possible by the current state and material capabilities of society. Elias offered such an explanation in *The Germans* for the rise of Nazism in Germany.[281] Following up on studies regarding the use of rationalised production processes and techniques in killing, it is argued that the holocaust was, in a sense, much more efficient precisely due to the way in which it was decoupled from 'mass hatred and collective frenzy'.[282]

The task of the sociologist of harm conventions lies in examining the way in which these processes occur, and to attempt to understand the way in which the interplay of civilizing and decivilizing processes plays out in particular historical contexts with respect to attitudes toward harm. Such examinations should not, despite their attempt to illuminate emancipatory potential, engage in the opposition of morality and power, but rather should look at the way in which the two are, in any given society, highly intertwined and subject to change. Moreover, it allows the development of a critical theory that does not fall into the

[279] Ibid., 164.
[280] Recent publications of his 'The Civilizing Process' have re-translated the title as 'On the Process of Civilization', a more accurate translation from the original which also indicates the relative nature of such processes. This translation of the title is used here.
[281] See Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell, 'Elias on Germany, Nazism and the Holocaust: On the Balance between "Civilizing" and "Decivilizing" Trends in the Social Development of Western Europe', *The British Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 3 (1998): 339–57.
[282] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 173.

Marxist pitfalls of espousing the dominance of production or the teleology of history which were discussed in the previous chapter and which Linklater has argued against.[283]

While highlighting the problems that arise from Marxism, the task of integrating the sphere of material reality and ideas remains. Linklater argues that thus far, most approaches to international politics have analysed either the ideational or material realms, rarely bringing them together.[284] Those that do often pose a fundamental issue that pushes the analysis one way or the other, placing ultimate limits on what can be considered within the ideational or material realms due to the 'final instance' decisiveness of the other in advance.[285] Having earlier argued that the two are intertwined, it becomes necessary to develop a holistic 'historical social psychology' that analyses the way in which state-formation, urbanization, marketization and so forth [are] viewed in conjunction with changing 'drive structures' and everyday emotions.'[286]

This synthesis would seek to understand, by combining 'emotionological' and material approaches, the way in which responses to suffering has changed over time and in different contexts. Examples might include the culture of human rights and charitable responses to natural disasters, both of which are particularly familiar to liberal writings on justice theory.[287] However, just as important for social cohesion are attitudes toward shame and guilt, which Elias argued were fundamental to the development of social conformity.[288] Without such an understanding, a more materialist analysis would have difficulty in identifying the basic act of recognition from which all forms of community develop. Linklater notes that positive changes in responses to scenes of harm and suffering over distance have been uneven and subject to competing logics of justification.[289] This highlights the importance of a historical social psychology in accounting for the moral deficit that lies between materially based stimuli (television, the internet, greater ability to witness different cultures through travel) and the bystander phenomenon, whereby the readily available presentation of forms of suffering is

[283] Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory'.
[284] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 194.
[285] Ibid., 201.
[286] Ibid., 207.
[287] Liberal theories of justice, often focussing on 'ideal' justice, often fail to acknowledge the historicity of such developments in international law or global morals. See Habermas' critique of Rawls' 'bracketing' of difference in Moon, 'Practical Discourse and Communciative Ethics', 158.
[288] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 211.
[289] Ibid., 226.

mediated by moral distancing.[290] Indeed, it may be the case that a form of desensitization is just as prevalent as the development of cosmopolitan empathetic responses. It remains the case that, for global advocacy groups, a causal account remains a significant element in promoting a given cause, demonstrating that a reliance on such emotions may still rely on a demonstration of material proximity or causal responsibility according to chains of interconnectedness.[291] This becomes increasingly difficult as causal linkages become more abstract and harm is likely to be distanced from the paradigmatic case of mental and bodily anguish.[292] The point is that sites of potential harm that are less visible due to their incremental nature, such as the economic, may be less easily articulated by lay subjects in such terms, providing an avenue for the critical work of the sociology of harm conventions. A lack of functional democratisation – the process through which the power-balance of society gradually evens out – as was present in the emancipatory struggles of the 19th Century may mean that critiques arising from social science, however, face problems when it turns to address highly embedded structures of power and decentred global social relations.[293]

Such an impasse in the historical development of harm is therefore the point at which the critical intention of Linklater's process sociological framework comes to light. In the first chapter, we saw the way that the problem of harm could be understood as core to many developments in IS due to their attempt to make new or changing forms of harm intelligible through theoretical innovations with a view to their critical value. If it is the case that the empathetic response to forms of suffering offer paradigm cases through which people can interpret and respond to the needs of others, then the critical task of the sociology of harm conventions is to adapt these understanding to a changing world; it is necessary to both broaden understandings to encapsulate new forms of harm, but also to deepen them such that understandings can become more nuanced. The sociology of harm conventions thus attempts to *inform* normative deliberation such that more realistic responses to the problem of the harm we do to others can be formulated. In doing so, it aims to perform a *labour of translation* between immediate experience and knowledge that can be shared with others, contributing new concepts to the negotiation of harm conventions that are adequate to the complexities of global interconnection and interdependence.

[290] Pemberton, 'A Theory of Moral Indifference: Understanding the Production of Harm by Capitalist Society', 77–82.
[291] Keck and Sikkink, cited in Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 98.
[292] Eckersley, cited in Ibid.
[293] Ibid., 229.

It is at this point we can see that two principles of the threefold problematic, those of object adequate historical sociology and the critical value of the concept of harm become linked, providing the 'emancipatory intent' that Linklater claims.[294] In this vein, Linklater's sociology might contribute to the development of ideas of harm focussed on, for example, imperialism or structural adjustment, bringing them within ethical deliberation in a way we have argued is characteristic of IS.[295] This, as we have seen, requires the development of concepts that are able to express abstract forms of social interconnection; as an example, criticisms of the intensification of global capitalism often focus on the way that harmful practices lie at the feet of large transnational corporations rather than any one specific individual, violating the pervasive tendency toward a focus on the individual in liberal ideas of justice.[296] However, if one of the key points at which International Studies can contribute to the problem of harm lies in its provision of concepts that express the complexities and interconnections of social life, then it is important to understand how such concepts can be formulated. While there are several ways in which this might be considered, we will examine Linklater's approach to structural harm as symptomatic of this process due to the way in which it lies at the intersection of the kinds of critique levelled by Marxism, green theory and gender theory, as well as sitting at the more 'abstract' end of Linklater's concrete/abstract continuum. This position, we argue, ensures that categories like structure occupy key points at which International Studies is able to contribute to understandings of harm that are not immediately visible but are, nonetheless, becoming more important as global interconnection becomes more complex.

Structural Harm

As we have seen, Linklater's taxonomy presented the problem of harm as the linking of two elements; the embodied experience of suffering and the social appropriation of this in the concept of harm. The link between these two is made according to a descriptive process; it depends on the ability to describe the interconnections and processes underpinning harmful practices. Linklater's suggestion that the sociology of harm conventions can contribute in a way that is sensitive to the problems raised by Critical Theory thus rests on the *kind of*

[294] From the title of Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"'.
[295] South America in particular has a long tradition of association with Marxist dependency theory. See Dennis Conway and Nikolas Heynen, 'Dependency Theories: From ECLA to Andre Gunder Frank and Beyond', in *The Companion to Development Studies*, 2nd Edition. (Hodder Education, 2008), 92–95.
[296] Paddy Hillyard et al., eds., *Beyond Criminology: Taking Harm Seriously* (Pluto Press, 2004), 270.

account that he envisions as being produced by this approach. If we understand the way that the problem of harm arises as the interplay between a generalisable recognition of suffering and a historically-delimited vocabulary through which it is articulated, then the critical task of the sociology of harm conventions is to render the latter more adequate to the former. However, we have seen that while many of the forms of harm presented may be reinterpreted in terms of agency, structural harm in particular would appear to require a greater labour of translation; it both requires a more complex account of social life that is able to take into account abstract phenomena, and has to fight for the recognition of accounts that are not reducible to personal responsibility. In particular, the latter has been a problem for advocacy networks who have often been let down by the individualist hegemony over jurisprudence.[297]

It would be folly to suggest, however, that there is some form of structural harm that cannot be described at least partially in terms of the way in which it affects subjects.[298] Rather, attempts to highlight the consequences of social structure in general argue for a structured or repeated way in which concrete outcomes in the lives of agents are bought about or influenced by forces that reach beyond the knowledge or intention of the agents themselves. It requires, therefore, that the (mis)understandings that agents labour under are contextualised against the real, potentially unrecognised processes that constitute social life. In this regard, arguments concerning social structure and its tendencies are a common feature of work, such as that of the Frankfurt School, which we examined last chapter. In that context, theorists from Marx to Adorno have based their normative injunction against suffering in society upon the existence of structured social development. In this vein, and recalling the critical potential of the sociology of harm conventions, Linklater argues:

> ‘Structural harm is no less dependent on high levels of institutionalization that make people vulnerable to the ways in which they are tied together in lengthening social interconnections. As noted earlier, Marxist and neo-Marxist analyses of global dominance and dependence in the capitalist world economy have highlighted harms that have less to do with the intentions of

[297] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 98.

[298] The essential question of what it is that comprises a subject is a key topic of debate, particularly in areas that seek to challenge the anthropocentric or humanist account. Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism And Political Theory: Toward An Ecocentric Approach*, 1st Edition. (Routledge, 1992), 60–71.

particular people than with structural compulsions and imperatives.'

'[…] one purpose of highlighting structural harm is to increase awareness of the ways in which certain actors consciously take advantage of the vulnerable while others are complicit, often unwittingly, in perpetuating harmful practices across the globe […]' [299]

Structural harm, for Linklater, is therefore those harmful practices which are driven less by intention than they are by structural pressures, and thus may underlie other forms of harm that he presents. In this regard, we can understand Linklater's account to be moving beyond a general idea of structural harm, and toward an understanding of social structure as presenting a vital component of various forms of harm; the role of structures *in* harm allows us to understand this factor as providing the essential social 'stuff' that allows harm to take place at various levels. In an argument which parallels those of Marx, Linklater seems to agree that there are forms of harm which are engaged in relatively freely, in a discretionary fashion, but also those that are structured and are less amenable to reflection being opened up by process of social scientific investigation. Just as Marx attempted to investigate the 'objective conditions' that confront man, Linklater hopes to open up harmful practices to a greater degree of deliberation through their explanation.[300]

The reason these forms of harm are so important is because they open up to ethical deliberation an entire sphere of social behaviour which cannot be understood by a constant recourse to human subjects' motivation or intention. It is important to note that despite the polemical power of the term 'exploitation', for example, Marxists maintain that a direct intention to harm does not need to be a necessary condition in the mind of the capitalist. As such, the ability to explain structures in harm allows us to understand forms of harm that are conducted knowingly or unknowingly, with or without malice. In the case of negligence, the harm occurs in the abandonment of a previously existing duty of care. Exploitation involves pushing or breaking the boundaries of a prior agreement. Complicity involves 'standing by' in the face of a particular form of harm. What they all bear in common is the existence of a

[299] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 73.
[300] Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte'.

prior contract that may or may not be considered as harmful, and the sociology of harm conventions can contribute to our understanding of whether it should be.

It is therefore important that Linklater's explanation of harm conventions within society, that they 'intercede between the capacity to injure and the condition[s] of vulnerability', is able to account for both subjectively recognised and unrecognised aspects of harmful practices if it is to have a strong critical purpose.[301] In particular, a lot rests on the way that material and ideational processes come to be interwoven, and how forms of knowledge come about in a more or less object-adequate fashion at various points in the development of society. One point at which the importance of accounts of social structure becomes apparent is in the blurring of the distinction between intention and unintentional, or concrete and abstract harm. This can serve to challenge the conventional liberal sensibility that cruelty is the worst thing we do, and lends the study of harm an important role in highlighting forms of harm that persist in the context of power dynamics that resist our questioning of their moral status.[302] The challenge lies precisely in the way that it brings to light the problematic nature of the liberal focus on individuals and the hard distinction between self- and other- regarding actions in the process of explanation. Cruelty is a necessary but insufficient aspect to consider if it is the case that 'the majority of harms are structurally determined' in some fashion.[303] The point is not to defend a structurally determined form of harm *a priori*, but to ask after how engagement with the structural and conditioning aspects of social life are possible objects of knowledge *from the point of view of how social science addresses them.*

In the sphere of harm conventions, the moment at which we register concern for the other and respond to them is faced by a potentially opposing tendency; that of the structured organisation of society which may push toward the satisfaction of some goal other than the amelioration of harmful practices. This highlights the way in which the critical value of the sociology of harm conventions, particularly in a complex interconnected world, lies in its ability to provide explanations that go beyond existing understandings to highlight the ethical implications of unquestioned social action. However, while we have seen what accounts of structural harm might offer, we are uncertain as to how we might arrive at them, or what is

[301] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 30.
[302] For a discussion of this point in the context of Rorty's claim to this effect, see John Kekes, 'Cruelty and Liberalism', *Ethics* 106, no. 4 (1 July 1996): 834–44.
[303] Steve Tombs and Paddy Hillyard, 'Towards a Political Economy of Harm: States, Corporations and the Production of Inequality', in *Beyond Criminology: Taking Harm Seriously* (Pluto Press, 2004), 53.

involved in the claim that a particular structure exists or tends in a particular direction. In short, it is necessary for us to address the kind of knowledge that is produced by Linklater's sociology, and how empirical investigation under this paradigm can contribute to normative or ethical deliberation. This task requires us to examine Linklater's social ontology in order to address the question of how the practice of social science can contribute to our practical engagement with the problem of harm in the vein that was argued for by the critical theorists.

b) Theoretical Foundations

Figurational Sociology

The theoretical basis for the sociology of harm conventions arises from Linklater's engagement with the work of Norbert Elias. This engagement results in Linklater adopting many of Elias' reformulations of classic sociological debates, including the structure/agency and insider/outside distinctions, which restrict the possible dynamics sociology was able to address in its classical guise.[304] This highlights the danger of fixed concepts in a similar way to Critical Theory; the theorist becomes responsible for perpetuating a reification that cannot bear the weight of reality and which may ultimately become complicit in the problems they seek to address. Against this, Elias attempted to put forward a reality-congruent sociology that understood the fabric of social life as a nexus of interacting processes which are constantly subject to change. Key to this was a focus on the processual nature of many of the objects of sociological investigation. Fixed designations, such as 'bureaucracy' or 'informal' for Elias are better understood as 'bureaucratisation' or 'informalisation'. This process of inherent change ensures that it is only ever possible to consider distinctions in our sociological explanations as relational properties.

This section will expound upon Linklater's engagement with Eliasian sociology in order to examine its implications for the sociology of harm conventions and the normative issues that arise from this. The aim is to address the way in which Linklater's approach to the sociology of harm conventions is able to account for the implications of Critical Theory with regard to the problems that harm raises. In doing so, it will engage with several aspects of this

[304] See in particular Stephen Dunne, 'The Politics of Figurational Sociology', *The Sociological Review* 57, no. 1 (2009): 28–57.

sociological framework, and in particular the concept of figuration and its consequences for our approach to the problem of harm. Given the importance that our theoretical apparatus has for our ability to address harm, we will be placing particular focus on the points at which Linklater's sociology can relate object adequacy and critical value, particularly in light of the clear normative purpose that the sociology of harm conventions holds.

The Figurational Approach

The foundation of Elias' research programme can be seen in his reaction against the philosophical and sociological debates that had characterised his own education.[305] These issues, including the structure/agency debate, the notion of time, and the philosophy of history, in Elias' eyes served to hold back the development of a practical and testable sociology particularly under the influence of Kantian philosophy. Against the reification of substantive categories, whether the Kantian *a priori* or the determinism of social structure, Elias would argue that there was little benefit in philosophical modes of enquiry, putting forward the empirical testing of sociology as a counterpoint to the dangerous state-reductionism that is carried out by frameworks that attempt to precede their object of enquiry.[306] In this regard, while Elias and Critical Theory would be in agreement concerning the way that concepts overruled the actual reality of social life, his process sociological framework would be suspicious of the focus on instrumental reason that characterised the work of Adorno et al. and instead focussed on the development of an empirically testable sociology.[307] By focussing on a historical sociological method, rather than extrapolating from an all-consuming focus on suffering, Elias' approach offers a way to bypass the totalising conclusions that we saw arising from accounts such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* while, Linklater suggests, maintaining the kind of normative interest that Critical Theory provokes.[308]

Elias claimed that the Kantian-influenced system of *a priori* assumptions and transcendental arguments underpinned an approach to sociology which took for granted a particular model of man as an 'adult', isolated from his position within society and thus

[305] Stephen Mennell, *Norbert Elias: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 7.
[306] Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*, 51.
[307] For a summary of their similarities and convergences, see Artur Bogner, 'Elias and the Frankfurt School', *Theory, Culture & Society* 4, no. 2 (1 June 1987): 249–85.
[308] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 23.

having essentialist consequences. This model, which he labelled *homo clausus*, was to be opposed as a violent abstraction from the truth that individuals and society were inconceivable except with regard to each other:

> "What actually binds people together into figurations? Questions like this cannot be answered if we start by considering all individual people on their own, as if each were a *Homo Clausus*. That would be to stay on the level [which studies] the individual person. […] In other words, all specifically sociological problems are reduced by these means to problems of social psychology. There is a tacit assumption that societies – figurations formed by interdependent people – are fundamentally no more than congeries of individual atoms."[309]

Rather than the model of the isolated person, sociology should consider people as interdependent; *Homines Aperti* rather than *Homo Clausus*. As an example to illustrate this, Elias argues that the interdependence betrayed by the pronouns 'you', 'we', 'he', or 'she' showed that the 'I' of the Cartesian subject could not exist in isolation. Sociology, therefore, must take into account the inevitability of multiple perspectives that are mutually constitutive in social life.

Given this inseparability of viewpoints between subjects, it also becomes evident that the 'outside' in individually oriented sociology, that of 'society', demonstrates a false dichotomy that is reified by this approach in social science. By contract, structuralist theories such as Marxism had thrown the baby out with the bathwater in overemphasising the dominance of structure. Both variants of sociological theory are guilty of a reductionism that is centred upon their attempts to provide a focussed investigation and which belies their political commitments.[310] Taking the *homines aperti* model as foundational allows a more flexible and objective approach to the explanation of social processes in a form that Elias labelled 'figurations':

> "If four people sit around a table and play cards together, they form a figuration. Their actions are interdependent. In this case, it is still possible to bow to tradition, and to speak of the 'game' as if it had

[309] Elias, *What Is Sociology?*, 132.
[310] Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 65.

> an existence of its own. […] But despite all the expressions which tend to objectify it, in this instance the course taken by the game will obviously be the outcome of the actions of a group of interdependent individuals. It has been shown that the course of the game is relatively autonomous from every single player, given that all the players are approximately equal in strength. But it does not have substance; it has no being, no existence independently of the players, as the word 'game' might suggest."[311]

Such a model addresses the weaknesses in structuralist or individualist conceptualisations of society by conceiving of the figuration as the relationships between the 'players' of the game in the round.[312] Any attempt to abstract from this complex web of interactions must be consciously analytical and avoid the reification of substantive categories. The concept of figuration, furthermore, highlights the importance of power as a relational, rather than something a subject can possess. In doing so, it allows significant insights into the importance of social position with relation to power, allowing complex analyses that are far more fluid than structuralist or individualist frameworks.

It is this difference in vocabulary that allows Elias to move beyond the problem of structure and agency. Indeed, we find that 'what we call 'figuration' with reference to the constituent parts is identical with what we call 'structure' with reference to the composite unit.'[313] Such a reorientation brings to light the nature of the structure/agency debate as a historical phenomenon that is characterised by a particular form of self-understanding with its roots in the enlightenment.[314] By instead focussing on the adequacy of a theory to its object, Elias' framework requires a synthesis of materialist and idealist explanation that defies conventional sociological tradition. Core to this effort is a relational approach that places supposedly autonomous objects with regard to each other, thus resulting in accounts that are more faithful to the reality of social life and, in the process, reflecting more clearly the

[311] Elias, *What Is Sociology?*, 130.
[312] For the phrase 'In the Round', see George Ritzer, *The Blackwell Companion to Major Contemporary Social Theorists* (Chichester, 2007), 199.
[313] Elias, *What Is Sociology?*, 176. See footnote 2
[314] This historical argument is, in conclusion if not in substance, remarkably similar to the thesis put forward by Adorno and Horkheimer, as we saw in the first chapter. For the way in which Elias' work parallels and differs from that done by his (for some time) neighbours in the *Institut* in Frankfurt, see Bogner, 'Elias and the Frankfurt School'.

complex process of mediating between structural determination and creativity in subjects' creation and re-creation of the problem of harm.

Elias' use of simple game models as heuristic devices demonstrate the import of a relational concept such as figuration.[315] Contrary to the determinism that we saw in the critical theorists' concern with instrumental reason, Elias' analyses focussed on *balances* of power and social function that are able to demonstrate the power relations that pertain between a child and their mother, or slaves and their masters. It also provides a basis from which we can begin to understand the disorientation that arises from complex and abstract forms of interconnection; high degrees of specialisation lead both to a greater functional dependency of subjects upon each other as each performs tasks that are a progressively smaller part of the whole, but this also leads to a corresponding lack of authoritative sway over large-scale outcomes or states of affairs. This seems to bear directly on the forms of harm, and particularly structures in harm, that we have noted. In particular, the kind of collective action problems that we saw at stake in Green Theory in the first chapter, are rooted in precisely this kind of disorientation – what the Frankfurt School may have considered a kind of collective irrationality. To use Elias' example of the game, the proliferation of players and number of layers at which the game is constituted becomes complex to the point that disorientation and a lack of relative influence with regard to the whole figuration begins to become apparent.[316] It was Elias' aim to allow people to orient themselves within these figurations in a way that could help them gain a greater awareness of their relative position within society; a position which is reflected directly in Linklater's understanding of the critical value the sociology of harm conventions provides.[317]

In line with this problem of disorientation, Elias maintains a clear focus on the unintended outcomes of social action.[318] The figurational framework highlights the way in which the actual direction of change in societies can only be understood in the form of a complex, even impenetrable nexus of interconnection and interpenetration for which the conventional concept of causation was hopelessly inadequate.[319] The idea that there was a prime or first mover cannot be applied to sociology on the basis that there never was a 'first man' that was not already a social being. Elias instead utilised the concept of function as a

[315] Elias, *What Is Sociology?*, 71.
[316] Ibid., 84.
[317] Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"', 189.
[318] Robert Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias* (Routledge, 1998), 6.
[319] Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*, 35.

way of indicating the 'existence of nexuses in the observable world' at which point processes encountered each other.[320] The culmination of this reformulation lies in acknowledging that society is always in a process of becoming, and gives rise to consideration of issues such as the problem of harm as long-term processes of negotiation and contestation across which any individual contribution forms only a part. Indeed, Elias' understanding of his own work was as one part of the 'chain of generations'.[321] The role of sociology under this concept of society is one of relatively detached evaluation, attempting to understand the processes that figurations take part in through an understanding of the various perspectives and social positions that exist within it.

Elias' work also holds appeal for Linklater due to its focus on the direction of long-term social processes, of which we have seen the problem of harm is one.[322] The expansive time-frames of Eliasian studies dwarf many studies of social change; comfortable with the physical sciences and theories of evolution, Elias adopted long-term perspectives that are more familiar in the context of geology or cosmology:

> "If humankind does not destroy itself, if it is not destroyed by a meteor or another cosmic collision […] the natural conditions of its existence will give humans the opportunity to tackle the problems of their life together on earth, or wherever, for a very long time to come. A future of 4000 million years should give humans the opportunity to muddle their way out of several blind alleys and to learn how to make their life together more pleasant, more meaningful and worthwhile. In the context of humanity's future, short-term perspectives are necessarily misleading."[323]

The outcomes of such long term processes are likely to be beyond the imagination of humanity as we currently know it; Elias pointed out how humanity, looking back from a time far in the future, would be likely to consider us as 'late barbarians' whose means of reality-congruent orientation were limited.[324] Such statements highlight the role of the detached sociologist in focussing on the direction of processes in society without becoming involved in

[320] Ibid., 36.
[321] Gabriel and Mennell, 'Handing over the Torch: Intergenerational Processes in Figurational Sociology', 5–6.
[322] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 159.
[323] Norbert Elias, *The Symbol Theory* (Sage Publications Ltd, 1991), 146. The period of time referred to here is that until which the condition of the sun destroys the prospect of human life on earth.
[324] Ibid., 146–47.

the projections of individuals – entanglements that betray theories such as Marxism and lead to their having a partial or ideological approach to social enquiry.

The combination of a focus on long-term processes of social change and the way in which they are manifested through complex nexuses of causes and functions, however, ensures that the normative aspect of the concept of figuration is somewhat unclear and hard to grasp. Indeed, contrary to the way in which normative claims are often drawn from concepts of structure or agency when applied to particular cases, Kilminster argues that 'What must be emphasized, though, is that 'figuration' is not a load-bearing structure in the Eliasian conceptual framework.'[325] This ambiguity finds support in critiques which draw upon the specific claims of sociology to relative detachment. In particular, the specific contribution of sociology is unclear if a tendency toward greater relative detachment is a process societies are to undergo more broadly.[326] From such arguments, it is hard to draw out the critical value that the sociology of harm conventions might hold; if structuralism and individualism in explanation both had significant normative consequences, then it is probably the case that figurations do too, particularly given the situated and historical nature of social science that Elias highlights. Indeed, historical sociology more broadly has made significant contributions to International Studies precisely along these lines; how we understand the changeability of the international system is at least partly influenced by our judgements as to its novelty or immutability.[327] It is clear that the long-term approach provides a valuable perspective on the development of society and the problem of harm which is a part of this process, but in developing figurations as a concept, their normative consequences remain unclear. We will now attempt to address these consequences in order to clarify how Linklater's Eliasian turn relates to the problems raised by Critical Theory in the context of the problem of harm.

Involvement and Detachment in a Scientific Sociology

It is clear that the formulation Elias developed is intended to result in a nuanced and testable sociology that provides a long-term perspective on processes of social development.

[325] Norman Gabriel and Stephen Mennell, *Norbert Elias and Figurational Research: Processual Thinking in Sociology* (Wiley, 2011), 20.
[326] Dunne, 'The Politics of Figurational Sociology'.
[327] Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations*, 2 edition (London: Verso, 2009).

Furthermore, this involves the 'sociologising' of various academic endeavours, including that of process sociology itself, in order to evaluate the extent to which they were 'involved' in ways that might preclude the relatively autonomous investigation of social life. These process of involvement clearly impact upon the ability of social science to provide object-adequate explanations of the ways in which the problem of harm plays out. Explanation is not a straightforward endeavour, however, and a process of reflexive self-monitoring is as much a feature of society of large as it is in the sphere of knowledge production; Linklater draws attention to the problem of the 'double bind', a key Eliasian heuristic, as a key problem in international politics.[328] How social science goes about this, then, is an issue of considerable importance if the critical value of the sociology of harm conventions is to contribute to the problem of harm more broadly. The process by which subjects project images of high fantasy-content in order to preserve its identity is a key point at which a process of detachment can contribute to a greater understanding of how we are situated with regard to the problem of harm; more broadly, it brings to light the way that ethically pressing concerns can quickly overwhelm the reality-congruence of our understandings. In order to illustrate this, Elias puts forward the attitude of a doctor toward his patient, demonstrating how the immediate empathetic response to suffering is less desirable than is a detached and more adequate approach to the problem.[329] In doing so, he detaches object adequacy from critical value, arguing that their eventual re-connection will ensure a stronger position for scientific enquiry in the long run.

The balance between involvement and detachment cannot be resolved firmly in either direction, but Elias argued that the role of the sociologist was to take a 'detour via detachment' that would result in more reality-congruent knowledge about the world and society. The culmination of this detour – the return to secondary involvement – is the point at which this knowledge can be understood as having a public-political role.[330] From the point of view of our investigation, this is the point at which the object-adequacy attained by the sociology of harm conventions comes to 'pay out' in critical value. On Elias' formulation, the critical value of knowledge is related to the degree of its object adequacy or reality congruence; the detachment achieved by the contemporary natural sciences is in this regard

[328] Andrew Linklater, 'Process Sociology and International Relations', in *Norbert Elias and Figurational Research: Processual Thinking in Sociology* (Blackwell, 2011), 52.
[329] Norbert Elias, 'Problems of Involvement and Detachment', *The British Journal of Sociology* 7, no. 3 (1 September 1956): 230.
[330] Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*, 14.

far greater than that so far achieved by the social sciences. Importantly, relatively autonomous judgements are rarely emotionally comforting in the manner that social myths are, but are essential in steering our way through the manifold dangers that confront human social life, particularly in the era of nation-states and highly destructive weaponry that Linklater highlights.[331] As harm confronts us in ever more abstract ways, it is clear that on this understanding of the conduct of scientific enquiry a commitment to detachment can operate as the basis for a scientific sociology that is better able to address these issues over the very long term.[332]

The idea that knowledge is formulated across a chain of generations is clearly a key aspect of this strategy. Elias' arguments demonstrate a belief that knowledge can be more or less adequate to its object, and thus that the arbiter of its utility must be the testing of knowledge claims against the world from which they have been drawn. However, this raises concerns regarding how this is to be the case; while Elias would note knowledge loss as well as knowledge-gain as a function of various social processes, it is clear that his normative preference is for a stock of knowledge that is gradually built and refined over time.[333] In this sense, when encountering the problems posed by the unobservability of particular forms of harm, we are encountering deficiencies in the current stock of available knowledge, methods and techniques.[334] In this case, it is uncertain whether the return to secondary involvement is ever possible with any degree of confidence in the adequacy of knowledge; in this sense, our ability to imbue explanations with critical value is impeded by many of the criticisms levelled by the Frankfurt School concerning faith in science and instrumental rationality.

This is not to suggest that the knowledge produced by Eliasian sociology is purely instrumental, but rather that its relationship to practices of instrumental control is ambiguous. The scientific status of the sociology of harm conventions, when developed along Eliasian lines, seems to maintain many of the uncertainties that we have seen in approaches to the problem of harm so far; in many cases, we are unclear as to the potential ramifications of a given explanation in the way that the threefold problematic lays out. The Eliasian response to this uncertainty consists of two pillars. Reality congruence is the extent to which a given stock of knowledge is able to grasp its object in its complexity. Detachment is the process by

[331] Ibid., 15.
[332] Ibid., 203–4.
[333] Ibid., 124.
[334] Ibid., 217. See footnote 67.

which the production of knowledge is conducted in a way that moves beyond a tendency toward heteronomous or biased evaluations. Both, conceptualised as processes that develop over time, give us an understanding of the role of science in approaching the problem of harm, but are nonetheless likely to be found wanting in one way or another at any given point. While indicating the attitude that the sociology of harm conventions should take, this formulation provides us with little insight into the ethical call that the problem of harm constitutes, and in doing so rests on the development of the scientific enterprise as a core value.

In this way, the gradual development of reality-congruent knowledge can be understood as the normative core that is at the heart of Eliasian sociology. It is not necessarily the case that this has to be identified with 'progress', as has often been noted by his defenders, but the idea of progress certainly pertains to sociology as a discipline, and knowledge production more broadly.[335] The return to secondary involvement is to occur once sociology has amassed a sufficient degree of reality-congruent knowledge such that it can contribute to the orientation of people toward each other in ways that are able to overcome the problems faced by the species.[336] In other formulations, this is put forward in a rather more 'scientific' manner, in the service of control.[337] While it would be facile to engage in questions of when this culmination would occur, it suffices to say that it is not now. As such, the critical import of the knowledge produced by figurational sociology is consistently deferred due to its incomplete nature, resisting the linking of object adequacy and normative concern that is core to how Critical Theory suggests we understand the role that International Studies can play in elucidating the problem of harm. This is most apparent in the way that the detour via detachment is described as being a useful endeavour 'assuming that one does not get lost on the way', a statement that clearly reveals the political implication of such a removal from political issues.[338] While it may be possible to cleave somewhat closer to an understanding of science based on the gradual gathering and formulation of knowledge, in claiming critical value for the sociology of harm conventions, Critical Theory

[335] Mennell, *Norbert Elias: An Introduction*, 235. Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*, 46.
[336] Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 267.
[337] Richard Kilminster, 'From Distance to Detachment: Knowledge and Self-Knowledge in Elias' Theory of Involvement and Detachment', in *The Sociology of Norbert Elias* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 32.
[338] Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*, 14. Similarly, Dunne notes that 'we cannot know where the detour via detachment will take us'. Dunne, 'The Politics of Figurational Sociology', 41.

would suggest that it is important to consider the political implications of what is being proposed.

The Politics of Process Sociology

Elias' figurational approach provides a framework for Linklater's sociology of harm conventions that that is suited to the investigation of the changing forms that the problem of harm takes over time. However, the approach to knowledge formation in figurational sociology reveals a disparity between scientific and normative questions that cannot be resolved due to the deferring of such attachments being at the core of Elias' theory of detached knowledge.[339] Given the key normative issues that the problem of harm provokes, it is clear that the articulation of the problem of harm from the perspective of Critical Theory does not allow a straightforward adoption of Linklater's sociological framework but must begin with an examination of the normative status of sociological investigation as a key point of contention. The tension between 'getting things right', on the one hand, and interventions based on normative standards means that the utility of the sociology of harm conventions must find a way to occupy this precarious position. Within figurational sociology, the consequence of this tension is that attempts to respond to the problem of critical value and demonstrate a strategy of practical involvement are in many cases rejected.[340]

This tension is most clearly seen in Elias' understanding of the natural sciences, which the social sciences were in some regards to aspire to, whereby greater reality congruent knowledge is attained by a 'detour via detachment'. When applied to sociology, this detour involves a movement toward greater self-restraint, psychologisation and rationalisation on the part of the social scientist.[341] As such, scientific activity is not linked to the values we hold beyond their role in determining the often vague direction of scientific enquiry. Despite the eventual political role of sociology in helping to orient people in a way that allows them greater control over the processes they are caught up in, there is little to indicate what values this political role might embody. This is contrary to the practical drive of the critical theorists,

[339] Elias, 'Problems of Involvement and Detachment'.
[340] Dunne, 'The Politics of Figurational Sociology', 41.
[341] Mennell, *Norbert Elias: An Introduction*, 163.

and serves to defer the important question of critical value until sociology is capable of articulating a body of reality-congruent knowledge with critical import.[342]

This approach raises two problems that can serve to orient the place of empirical investigation with regard to the broader questions asked in this thesis. Firstly, as has been indicated at various points above, academic drives toward detachment are always part of broader political processes due to the way in which they can only be considered through their relationship to a wider social background.[343] In general, the answer from approaches that adhere rigidly to a sociological attitude would be the necessity of a 'sociology of sociology' in order to examine this problem. This, however, contributes to the deferral of the problems posed by social involvement at a yet-higher level, and does not successfully negotiate the ethical issues that come with this involvement.[344] This deferring of political concern, in the long term, does not move beyond issues of philosophy in the way that Elias hoped.[345] Such 'transcendental hangovers' are necessary at some point if one is to ask what sociology should look like if it is to contribute to the political and normative life of the species.[346]

In response to this, Eliasian scholars have argued that figurational sociology, in detaching itself from the short-term ideological struggles of the day, does not resolve the problems that philosophy attempts to address so much as it dissolves them, reformulating them 'on a higher level'. Such an argument is often presented by Kilminster, arguing that this reformulation marks Elias' work as structurally different to philosophy.[347] The danger of such a response is that it leaves political or normative commitments free to enter by the back door. Despite his evident commitment to detached social enquiry, Elias maintained particular areas of focus in his work that can be understood as a normative commitment to secular humanism.[348] It remains the case, then, that the return to secondary involvement maintains some philosophical or normative core that is permissive of it. Based on some of Elias' arguments concerning the approach of sociology, we can get a sense of what this normative core might involve.

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[342] Dunne, 'The Politics of Figurational Sociology', 41.
[343] Linklater himself is, of course, familiar with this idea. See Linklater, 'Transforming Political Community', 173. The argument of *The Problem of Harm in World Politics* appears to work on a similar assumption, but it is not fleshed out, and thus maintains the aporia between object adequacy and critical value.
[344] As an example, this would then require the sociology of the sociology of sociology, *ad infinitum*.
[345] Kilminster, 'Norbert Elias's Post-Philosophical Sociology: From "Critique" to Relative Detachment', 98.
[346] The term here is Kilminster's. Ibid., 108.
[347] Richard Kilminster, *Norbert Elias: Post-Philosophical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2007), 34.
[348] Kilminster lays out the possibility of secular humanism as a research programme. See Ibid., 131.

Of particular interest in this regard is the focus of Eliasian sociology on the development of long-term social processes. In attempting to escape the retreat of sociology 'into the present' which served to reinforce historically-placed notions of individuality and subjectivity, the work of Elias often focussed on timescales that were substantially longer than most.[349] Such an approach, of course, has the benefits that come with an expanded scope, including the ability to render a complex nexus of causes as historical processes. However, unless one is to negotiate the ethical problems that come with the return to practical involvement, it must do so through a neglect of present political struggles such as those we observed motivating engagement with the problem of harm in the first chapter. In doing so, one runs the risk of 'smoothing over' events that constitute a rupture or break with previous states of affairs.[350] It thus projects a particular picture of the society that is the object of sociological enquiry. Given that processes can be stopped, started and reversed, the eventual designation of this or that process can only be pragmatically articulated. The point of the 'return' or critical moment, or the public role of sociology as a 'destroyer of myths' is to bring these processes *within* the realm of intention and political discourse; the long term view thus does not exhaust the questions that may be asked of sociological knowledge.[351] In this case, the Eliasian sociology that Linklater employs can interrogate the problem of harm, but not in a way that articulates clearly the normative commitments that are inherent to social scientific activity, either in general or deriving from its historical limitations. In this vein, we argue that it does not provide us a complete account of how we might navigate the link between scientific investigation and normative goals that Linklater suggests following the contributions of Critical Theory, and in doing so does not account for one of the key issues raised by the threefold problematic.[352]

These ambiguities ensure that the clearest aspect of Elias' strategy for the return to secondary involvement lies in a focus on control and mitigation as the social function of scientific knowledge.[353] While it is the case that Elias' research programme was 'structurally different to philosophy' in the sense that his was a project of empirical research, the argument that it has *transcended* it seems premature while the question of critical engagement still

[349] This, of course, is foundational to the identity of process sociology in the first instance. Elias, *The Symbol Theory*, 146.
[350] As was argued by Pierre Bourdieu. See Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 80.
[351] Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 268.
[352] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 23.
[353] Kilminster, 'From Distance to Detachment: Knowledge and Self-Knowledge in Elias' Theory of Involvement and Detachment', 32.

remains.[354] This is not to suggest that process sociology does not have a role; indeed, we argue that in some form it is essential. However, in the context of the problem of harm, and particularly the strong source of normative engagement that it has held for International Studies, the power dynamics inherent in any answer to this question are important. Furthermore, who is to control or be controlled, how that is to be the case, and what form that control should take are questions that raise significant normative alarm bells following the critique of instrumental reason arising from Critical Theory, and does not lend much insight into the process of transitioning from scientific and detached knowledge to the ethical world of thinking subjects.[355]

The Sociologist in Society

Having argued that Linklater's adoption of the Elias's approach to sociology does not fully account for the way in which critical value might arise from social-scientific accounts, we can begin to frame the key issue that the remainder of this thesis will address. This concerns ways in which we might occupy the space between an answer to the problem of object adequacy and a normative orientation toward suffering in a way that maintains the contribution of social science in light of the problems raised by Critical Theory. While the critical theorists put the possibilities that come with social science in an ambiguous but vital position based on its potential relation to the normative demands of suffering, we have argued that Linklater's Eliasian sociology prioritises object-adequacy while the normative questions that the problem of harm provokes remain somewhat ambiguous. In working through this tension, the aim is to formulate an understanding of social science that is responsive to the demands of both camps and thereby validating the problem of harm as a source of normative concern for International Studies.

While Elias would never claim that he was, or could be, completely detached, the ideal of sociological knowledge production maintains detachment as a key point of reference. A faith in scientific development and a focus on empirically testable models come together to mask rather than expunge a normative foundation which is open to critique.[356] If we acknowledge that the sociologist must be located within, and relative to, the society that is

[354] Richard Kilminster, 'Norbert Elias's Post-Philosophical Sociology: From "critique" to Relative Detachment', *The Sociological Review* 59 (2011): 95.
[355] Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 169.
[356] Ibid., 81.

being studied as well as to the world in general, it is all the more likely that this critique is pertinent to the further development of the sociology of harm conventions. Despite Elias' tendency toward formulating a specifically scientific and thus relatively detached sociology, the extent to which scientific knowledge is socially embedded and derives its normative goals from the broader social totality have been demonstrated repeatedly.[357] This problem is embedded in the threefold problematic that the problem of harm provokes as the problem of reflexivity, and has been one of the key contributions of Critical Theory to International Studies specifically.[358]

With regard to these objections, it is clear that Elias considered the knowledge that he was engaged in producing as a contemporary possibility that was to be superseded at some point in the future by the development of new methods and paradigms that were more reality congruent, in line with the reproducibility and falsifiability of scientific experiments. The prospective sociology of sociology that is one way of addressing the normative aporias that accompany this approach merely continues this pattern of ambiguity in relation to normative concern. While the empirical focus on long term and unplanned social processes can be seen to be an important area for sociological investigation, the relationship of such knowledge to normative value and critique leads us to suggest that we might develop an account of how the knowledge produced by sociology can engage with the sphere of ethical reflection and intentional action.

In grounding the sociology of harm conventions on an Eliasian basis, Linklater does not fully relationship between object adequacy and critical value that we have seen was the result of – and key challenge to – Critical Theory's concern with the problem of harm. Sociological knowledge performs the role of informing subjects' awareness of their involvement in the world in such a way as to orient them toward a greater degree of control over previously unintended outcomes. However, the commitment to detachment that is intrinsic to Eliasian sociology, which provides it with a great deal of purchase on the processes that culminate in the problem of harm, operates in a way that removes the production of sociological knowledge from this process of normative deliberation. At minimum, the point at which such investigations may have an impact on the way that we

[357] The development of the sociology of science following the work of Kuhn has served to highlight the social nature of scientific knowledge production. This is not to suggest that Elias was unfamiliar with this – he certainly was – but to highlight the way in which his vision for a detached sociology raises questions concerning the status of his own normative reflections.

[358] Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory', 45.

expand our understanding of the problem of harm only makes the leap into the sphere of politics once a sufficient body of knowledge has been inaugurated; moreover, the criterion for such a leap are ill-defined beyond an interest in the increase of technical control. We are left with an understanding of social scientific activity that may only engage in a normative fashion at an indeterminate – and possibly never present – point in the future. Under these conditions, it is entirely possible that normative value arises from sociological work, but the shape that this takes with regard to the problem of harm is unclear.

Nonetheless, there are aspects of Linklater's sociology that give rise to interesting possibilities for how we might investigate the problem of harm on an empirical basis, particularly with regard to time scales and process-oriented thinking. More generally, if sociology is to return to a public-political position, then the value that Eliasian scholars such as Linklater place on the production of sociological knowledge cannot be entirely exhausted by the formulation of that knowledge. The argument is that we can consider the *preconditions* for the return to secondary involvement in light of the uncertainty provoked by Elias' account, and ask what kind of knowledge allows us to make that move. This would constitute a linking of object adequacy and critical value in the way that Critical Theory suggests should be the case. Such an examination is possible, we will argue, by considering the contribution of empirical and sociological knowledge in light of developments in the philosophy of science.

If this is to be the case, the first question that we must ask regards the position of sociological knowledge in relation to the broader social world; a question that is necessitated by the way in which Elias' work consistently expresses such a relationship in the form of object-adequate or reality congruent accounts. The second concerns how we go about rendering intelligible these accounts for the day-to-day critical activity of subjects, a question of utility that requires an examination of their critical value. In this context, sociology provides a way of linking the concerns highlighted by Critical Theory with the wider social world; furthermore, it provides a context in which the experience of suffering *places demands* on International Studies to combat problematic modes of scientific engagement. In doing so, it allows us to better understand what is at stake for International Studies in the problem of harm, and why it feels the need to return to it as often as it does.

Conclusions

The previous chapter concluded by demonstrating the way that Critical Theory had succeeded in presenting the problem of harm as a key area of normative concern, but did so in a way that placed great pressure upon attempts at social scientific activity that were oriented toward social change. This chapter addressed Linklater's sociology of harm conventions as an attempt to address this problem; in terms of the threefold problematic, the aim was to understand how the link between object adequacy and critical value was formulated, and how this might sustain an empirical approach to the problem of harm. The conclusion was that Linklater's sociology holds an ambiguous position toward how the two might be related in contrast to the critical theorists' insistence on the absolute priority of suffering. In doing so, it is able to provide an account of long-term social processes which is in keeping with developing patterns of global interconnection and the harmful consequences that may result. However, we argued that important philosophical questions remain; an understanding of how figurational dynamics give rise to social entanglements does not exhaust the question of how sociological knowledge can come to be involved in the amelioration of harmful practices. In this regard, the Eliasian argument for greater relative detachment in sociological knowledge does not fully move beyond important issues in the philosophy of science that centre on the kinds of objects that the social sciences refer to. The further development of our argument, therefore, rests on the idea that Linklater's democratic normative standard can be supplemented by another, which arises from the relationship between the sociology of harm conventions and the problem of harm to which it refers.

Linklater's sociological approach, as we have seen, makes a strong argument for the historical study of harm conventions as a contribution to the critical project. This holds immediate intuitive appeal in the context of Critical Theory, particularly given the similar way that each perspective accounts for the relationship between suffering and the problem of harm. However, the relationship between process sociology and the philosophical issues raised by Critical Theory remains a point of contention, a debate to which this thesis hopes to contribute. This issue is, we suggest, ever more pressing in the context of developing patterns of global interconnection; the development of new forms of harm in a complex global setting pushes us to consider the way in which the discipline might formulate viable accounts of abstract and structural harm and the normative consequences that may result. In doing so, the

sociology of harm conventions might better engage in the normative debate concerning particular forms of life that Linklater suggests it should.[359]

This assessment raises the possibility of a reconstruction of the sociology of harm conventions that might, as a preliminary task, attempt to clarify these issues and in doing so gain a greater insight into what is involved in the 'return to secondary involvement'. The tradition of reconstruction, characteristic of the reflexive efforts undertaken by Critical Theory throughout its history, operates in two ways.[360] Firstly it seeks to make the assumptions and normative commitments of theoretical endeavour more apparent. Secondly, where problems or tensions are found, it serves to reformulate these in a manner that is more adequate to the underlying impulse; in our case, this impulse is the consistent engagement with the problem of harm that we found in International Studies. In order to do this, we will aim to address the underlying assumptions and philosophical commitments that were at the core of Linklater's project and proceed to situate this reconstructed sociology with regard to Critical Theory.

The starting point for this reconstruction will be involve a re-examination and development of some of the ambiguities that arise from Linklater's account, foremost among which concerns the relationship between sociological knowledge and its normative standpoint. As we have suggested, the main point at which the process sociological account attempts to make this link rests on the relative detachment that sociology can achieve in its focus on long-term social processes. However, it is important to understand the normative implications of greater or lesser degrees of object adequacy in the relationship between the sociology of harm conventions and the problem of harm more broadly. In doing so, we might better understand how knowledge stands in relationship to the objects of sociological investigation in addition to its validity in the eyes of other subjects. The aim of our account, therefore, is to outline the way in which the relationship between the scientific drive toward object adequacy and the critical value of normative engagement can be related.

The following chapters will deal with the various aspects of this reconstructive effort in order to work toward a conception of empirical enquiry that is better able to address the implications of Critical Theory for the problem of harm in International Studies. Chapter 4

[359] Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"', 189.
[360] Jørgen Pedersen, 'Habermas' Method: Rational Reconstruction', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 38, no. 4 (12 January 2008): 461.

will consider the question of object adequacy in the sociology of harm conventions, drawing particularly on a Critical Realist philosophy of science that we argue is suited to further developing the Eliasian perspective. This serves to both provide an understanding of the drive toward object adequacy and relate it to critical value. Chapter 5 will then put forward the approach to reflexivity that arises from this account, and demonstrate the consequences that it has for our negotiation of the threefold problematic that Critical Theory understands as central to our engagement with the problem of harm. In doing so, we argue that it is able to maintain the important insights of process sociology within a framework which is attentive to the normative and philosophical questions that Critical Theory suggests should be central to processes of social scientific investigation.

Chapter 4 – Ontology and the Sociology of Harm Conventions

Introduction

The previous chapter concluded with the argument that Linklater's sociology of harm conventions provided a descriptively rich way of addressing the processes that give rise to ideas of harm, but contrary to its aims did not fully formulate an approach to normative concern compatible with the demands of Critical Theory.[361] In particular, two of the implications of Critical Theory for our understanding of the problem of harm – the problems of object adequacy and critical value – were not linked in a fashion that would allow us to understand the normative implications of social scientific investigation. From the viewpoint of Critical Theory then, Linklater's approach leaves us unsure of the value that arises from the way that the sociology of harm conventions relates to the objects to which it seeks to refer. We argued that this ambivalence arises from the failure of Eliasian sociology to engage with normative issues, leading to an unclear articulation of the value of social scientific explanation. In response, we suggested that a reconstruction of the sociology of harm conventions might better account for this ambiguity, and in doing so provide an account of what the Eliasian return to secondary involvement might look like.

This raises problems for the normative promise that an engagement with the problem of harm presents for International Studies. In the first chapter, we saw that engagements with the problem of harm served the social function of rendering forms of harm more intelligible and clarifying their nature in order to open them up to critical engagement; Linklater's approach can be seen as an explicit attempt to provide a sociological basis through which the normative that harm presents can be redeemed. Without an understanding of the values inherent to social scientific work, we are unable to clarify what contribution International Studies can make to debates centred on the problem of harm. This is particularly the case in situations where explanations in the interest of disadvantaged or outsider groups run up

[361] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 23.

against embedded understandings that operate in the service of harmful practices such as structural inequality. In the case of Eliasian sociology, a lack of engagement with philosophical questions leads to an unclear account of the kinds of social change that sociological knowledge contributes to; the critical value of particular social situations becomes subsumed under a focus on long-term processes that are not amenable to subjective intention when it is precisely the role of the sociology of harm conventions to bring them within this sphere. Our ability to engage with these processes in a more active fashion remains an important philosophical question which, we will argue, rests on the kinds of objects that social science refers to in its explanations. These normative issues are further underpinned by Elias' rejection of involved normative enquiry in the service of an undertheorised 'return to secondary involvement' that takes place once sociological knowledge is sufficiently developed.

This chapter is an attempt to negotiate the relationship between normative content and object adequacy in social science through a reconstruction of the sociology of harm conventions. In particular, it starts from the idea that it is possible for us to examine the preconditions of the kind of 'return to secondary involvement' that Elias lays out through an engagement with the philosophical questions that we found to be neglected in the last chapter. It will therefore attempt to demonstrate how we can make the connection between 'explicit normative commitments' and 'reality congruent knowledge' with regard to the problem of harm, as Linklater suggests that we should.[362] In this regard, we will address some of the foundational critical and political implications of empirical knowledge in a way that is linked directly to the activity of IS as it approaches the problem of harm.

The fulcrum around which this effort turns concerns an account of social objects, in particular social structure, and a formulation of how this can serve as an object of knowledge for social scientific engagement in particular. This arises from our engagement with the idea of structural harm in Linklater's work, an idea that we suggested highlighted the necessity for an investigation of ontological issues that are central if the sociology of harm conventions is to address forms of abstract harm that arise from new patterns of global interconnection. Furthermore, this to be formulated in a way which avoids the reification that Elias and the critical theorists were so cautious of.[363] We will argue that that the possibility of combining the sociology of harm conventions with a critical strategy involves an attempt to analytically

[362] Ibid.
[363] Elias, *What Is Sociology?*, 132.

separate aspects of society from the broader processes that is a part of – in other words, to abstract from the complex causal nexuses that characterise social life. Furthermore, this practice involves a particular form of critical activity that arises from the practice of social science itself and operates in a way that is separate from, but not incompatible with, the normative standard Linklater adopts.

Central to this reconstruction will be an examination of Critical Realism (CR) as a set of philosophical commitments that vindicate the critical and development of social scientific practice, and IS by corollary. Critical Realism presents a valuable contribution to the effort undertaken here; it has both been influential in the development of work in IS and has key affinities with Eliasian process sociology, although such relationships have not been explored fully.[364] The starting point for the position taken by CR is the transcendental question of *what the world must be like for social science to be possible*, a question which introduces a subject/object aspect to investigation that is rejected in Eliasian sociology.[365] The characteristic conclusions that follow from this question, that the subject exists in the context of a relatively mind-independent reality that is susceptible to scientific investigation, raises the possibility of a reflexive and systematic form of sociological investigation that is centred on causal enquiry.[366] In the context of the sociology of harm conventions, Critical Realists

[364] There have been several engagements based largely on the influence that critical realism has come to have in sociology. Krieken argues that Elias' position is 'basically that of 'neo-realism''. Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 72. However, against this Kilminster argues that Elias' sociological model of the sciences was 'of a kind that would today be called a realist one, although without the transcendental, philosophical inspiration of much of the current work in this field'. Kilminster, *Norbert Elias: Post-Philosophical Sociology*, 132. Dunning and Hughes draw attention to arguments concerning Elias' empiricism with respect to Bourdieu, who has often been put forward in critical realist terms in Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*, 199. Most recently, Walsh has attempted to reconcile some of the problems argued for in the last chapter with an approach that derives from critical realism. See Philip Walsh, 'Is a Post-Philosophical Sociology Possible? Insights from Norbert Elias's Sociology of Knowledge', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 44, no. 2 (1 March 2014): 179–200. Also Philip Walsh, 'On Post-Philosophical Sociology A Reply to Richard Kilminster', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 45, no. 4–5 (1 July 2015): 508–14.

[365] This argument is at the core of Kilminster's critique of attempts to read Elias philosophically. For a summary see Kilminster, 'Norbert Elias's Post-Philosophical Sociology'.

[366] Later developments of Bhaskar's system can be seen to claim a good deal more, as what are called his 'dialectical' and 'spiritual' turns indicates. This move has been controversial both within and without critical realism. The argument is that later developments present a 'non-reductive sublation' of the original model presented in *A Realist Theory of Science* and *The Possibility of Naturalism*. This may be the case – it is certain that there are elements of the dialectical vision of critical realism that require the most thoroughgoing critical appropriation. However, for the purposes of this thesis as written from the point of view of *social science*, such engagement is unnecessary (but may well form the basis for future work), and works on the belief that 'original' critical realism is operative as a theory of science in a way that does not require elaboration beyond the core claims found in those works. For an indication of these debates and tendencies in the field, see Mervyn Hartwig, 'Introduction to Roy Bhaskar, The Possibility of Naturalism', 2014.

argue that an understanding of how reality is not always immediately apparent allows us to conceptualise social science as functioning in a situation which does not allow unmediated access to the social world. Explaining these social strata at various levels, as well as their interconnection, allows us to better account for the structural element of harm claims as well as structural harm *per se*, thus clarifying some of the ontological questions raised in the last chapter with regard to the value of engaging with the problem of harm in IS. Furthermore, it gives some hints as to the value of social scientific knowledge in clarifying, explaining and bringing to light harmful situations such that it can contribute to the problem of harm in a productive fashion.

The resulting reconstruction of the sociology of harm conventions demonstrates an approach to the problem of object adequacy that circumscribes society as a *sui generis* object of knowledge which is in key respects separate from the way that we talk about it. As such, it contributes to a form of enquiry that contributes to the critique of existing social conditions. More particularly, it is able to acknowledge its own limitations in a way that was not built-in to the Eliasian approach, locating this in a failure of the subject/object relationship rather than just as a failure of detachment and accounting for the way this is presented in the formation of scientific knowledge. As such, it offers an account of the role of social structures in our accounts of the problem of harm, as well as their fallibility, by decoupling of our knowledge of structure from its causal effects. In doing so, we are able to maintain the importance of accounts of structural harm, particularly where asymmetric power relations may serve to disguise its prevalence and effects. This leads us to suggest that the subject/object axis rejected by Eliasians in fact constitutes an important point at which social science can contribute to developing understandings of harmful practices.

In performing this reconstruction, we are able to clarify several points that remained ambiguous in Linklater's approach to the problem of harm in a way that provides an essential link between the problems of object adequacy and critical value, thus remaining responsive to the demands of Critical Theory. This link rests on the Critical Realist idea of explanatory critique, through which beliefs and social institutions such as social structure become subject to criticism based on the development of scientific knowledge. As such, we are able to locate a second normative standard that compliments Linklater's and which inheres in the way that social science is related to its object of enquiry. However, the necessarily provisional nature of knowledge production under this framework, as well as the social limitations that it requires us to acknowledge are part and parcel of scientific activity, still need to be

considered in light of their potential contribution to harmful practices. How the reconstruction put forward here relates to the problem of reflexivity, as the third aspect of the threefold problematic, is to be considered in the final chapter.

Social Structure as a Discrete Object of Knowledge

In our examination of Linklater's Eliasian sociology, we encountered several claims that concerned the way in which figurations become objects of knowledge for us, and which lead to the necessity of an account of ontology that can underpin the sociology of harm conventions and its relation to practice. This, we argued, demonstrated the need for a greater understanding of the objects that social science refers to if we are to understand more fully the way in which it relates to the problem of harm. This relates to the linking of object adequacy and critical value that Critical Theory insists on in our understanding of the threefold problematic. In the first instance, the explanations that the sociology of harm conventions provides necessarily makes reference to the forms of social interconnection that they refer to; we saw some of these in Linklater's taxonomy of harms. Furthermore, in formulating knowledge of this social background, some forms of social life may require us to abstract in order to identify deeper patterns and structures.[367] These social interconnections are not entirely reducible to the concepts held by agents but instead are conceptualised and renegotiated in a reflexive fashion. This raises the question of what it is the sociology of harm conventions refers to in its critical engagement with the problem of harm.

This section aims to address this question, arguing that the project of the sociology of harm conventions implies the necessity of a discrete analytical object in the form of social structure. In doing so, it serves to resituate the practice of sociology with regard to the philosophical reflection on ontology and epistemology that Elias was so reticent to engage in. Such a relationship between Eliasian sociology and the Critical Realist (CR) philosophy of science addressed here has been hinted at several times both within and without the key authors in process sociology, but has remained a limited debate. The aim is to engage in a process of underlabouring through which we can begin to make sense of the critical import of the sociology of harm conventions, and which, as we saw in the last chapter, is precluded in a process-focussed approach to sociology.

[367] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 38.

Linklater's contribution to our understanding of harm in IS was to reformulate it sociologically as *the problem of harm*. Rather than strictly defining harm, the sociology of harm conventions shifts our focus toward the changing set of social interactions that are recognised as harmful, and which are arrived at through a historical process of social negotiation. They are, therefore, *emergent* from social and historical circumstance due to the way in which their possibility is historical and transitive; they may not have been possible in different times or in different places. Elias was, in all likelihood, correct in arguing that such changes are likely to lie in the realm of unintended consequences.[368] However, in the last chapter we saw that the critical value of the sociology of harm conventions lies in how it might mitigate these such that possibilities for the amelioration of harmful practices might result. It is necessary, then, for us to account for the way that knowledge relates to the object that it attempts to account for. Without such a process of investigation, it becomes difficult to clarify the implications of the control or orientation that Elias espoused as a generalised normative goal for sociology.[369]

This attempt, however, takes place in the context of the concerns raised by both Critical Theory and figurational sociology with regard to reification, and more generally the problem of object adequacy in the context of the problem of harm. In this case, rather than an objectively existing real and emergent object, concepts become a useful but also dangerous reduction on the part of the social scientist through which social objects are rendered static rather than fluid. While the critical theorists understood reification as a process that arises from a dependency upon instrumental reason in the struggle against nature, Elias made the parallel sociological argument that reification constitutes part of a narrativising process through which people simplify complex phenomena in order to live their lives in a stable fashion.[370] The potential violence that such reifications can be complicit in means that the question of whether we are *committed* to reification when we discuss social structure is of great importance. If, on the contrary, social science is engaged in discussing something ontologically separate from its accounts of social reality, then such understandings may serve to open up areas of social life to critical evaluation that would not be accessible otherwise.

[368] Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 6.
[369] Stephen Dunne, 'The Politics of Figurational Sociology', *The Sociological Review* 57, no. 1 (2009): 48.
[370] Richard Kilminster, 'Norbert Elias's Post-Philosophical Sociology: From "critique" to Relative Detachment', *The Sociological Review* 59 (2011): 110.

Debates in the philosophy of science have reflected upon these issues with a view to understanding the values implicit in the practice of science. In considering whether an analytically viable concept of social structure is possible in a way that is not merely reificatory, Harre and Bhaskar have debated whether social structure is real beyond the concepts that subjects use when they engage in speech acts. Harre argues:

> "It is only a change of discursive conventions that changes the lived narrative that is a social order. Where does political action start? It starts in the everyday stories that you [people] tell, […] how they live their lives, but not in terms of grand taxonomic concepts. Real change, that is permanent amelioration of the conditions of life, occurs on a very small scale."[371]

Social structure is one of the key 'grand taxonomic concepts' that Harre is addressing. When we utilise the concept of structure, we apply a taxonomy that is an object of thought, both immaterial and non-causal beyond this. The social realm can be understood as the discursive construction of agents and the way that they comprehend the world. Emancipation and social change are thus to be found in a kind of grammatical reform, with the failure to do so being located in the maintenance of forms of discourse that are not cognisant of the processes and potentials of social life. Such a categorisation is clearly amenable to Linklater's project, particularly in the context of Elias' argument against state-reductive or difference-insensitive thinking.

The idea that language may have to fundamentally change in the process of emancipation may be the case, but this assertion does not appear to exhaust the causal potential of social structure. The speech act, which is the basis of Linklater's broader evaluative standard for harm conventions in its Habermasian form, does not operate in isolation from a social background, but nor is it merely reflective of it; in the critical arguments we have seen from the critical theorists and Elias, it is necessary to do justice both to the conditioned and creative aspects that the process of social negotiation involves.[372] The most immediate response to Harre's constructionism is to argue that there is in all cases some

[371] Harre, Rom and Bhaskar, Roy, 'How to Change Reality', in *After Postmodernism: An Introduction to Critical Realism*, ed. Lopez, Jose and Garry Potter (Athlone Press, 2001), 27.

[372] Hanks draws attention to human interests, of which the critical emancipatory interest is one, as having a transcendental *function*, but arise from the concrete life of humanity. Craig J. Hanks, *Refiguring Critical Theory: Jurgen Habermas and the Possibilities of Political Change* (Lanham, MD: University Press Of America, 2002), 60.

restriction on what can be proposed in circumstances of normative deliberation, as evidenced by the restrictive causal impact of material distribution. Our understanding of these restrictions is precisely what makes the sociology of harm conventions necessary in the first place, and was one of the failings of Critical Theory in its tendency toward generalisations. In this spirit, Bhaskar notes the availability of particular ingredients on the ability of a cook to perform his work as evidence of this causal impact.[373] While it may be the case that reificatory practice may be one limit on what people might think or do, it is also the case that reference to particular material distributions demonstrates the existence of something that is more than contingent, a necessary relationship that is the essential background against which subjects are historically positioned. The utility of such a reference point is evident given the way in which the organisation of material capabilities often presents us with situations in which the distribution of discursive power is decidedly asymmetrical; in the last chapter, we saw the impact that this may have on agents' abilities to gain acknowledgement for particular forms of harm. Furthermore, the debates in International Studies in the first chapter showed this struggle for recognition operating within the sphere of social scientific activity. In these contexts, more than will is required if change is to be brought about.

Harre's response distinguishes between causing and conditioning in these forms of negotiation, effectively isolating the play of language games from such historical features. However, Bhaskar contests this distinction, revealing both the close relationship between subjects and their environments and the beginning of an account of sociological knowledge that is sensitive to their interplay:

> "Social structures can certainly enable as well as constrain. In that sense, they are positive as well as negative. It is correct to argue that nothing can happen for those structures to maintain themselves in being without human activity. But that is trivial. I can't see the point in distinguishing […] except if you want to say that positive causality is just human intentional causality. But that seems totally arbitrary."[374]

And goes on to claim that structure, as a taxonomic category:

[373] Harre, Rom and Bhaskar, Roy, 'How to Change Reality', 29.
[374] Ibid., 36.

> "Is not only a taxonomic category, it is a taxonomic category with a referent."[375]

Bhaskar's argument holds strong similarities to that of the critical theorists, particularly with regard to the potential consequences of the accounts we give of society. The idea of social construction that Harre defends is essentially self-referential in that freedom lies with the ability of a person or group to reinvent themselves and their relationship to each other. However, when structures become institutionalised or abstracted and rendered present in social action, they are capable of causal impacts recursively, taking a role that Harre is incapable of recognising outside of language. To this extent, the fact that we cannot observe structures in an empirical manner does not inhibit our interaction with them. This runs parallel to Marx's critique of political economy; people refer to abstract structures in both their inner and outer lives, and they may have an impact both on the way in which people think and the way they act, labour and organise the material world. This was certainly the case for various green, gender and postcolonial theories that we saw in the first chapter. If this is the case, then they are an object of knowledge for us, and have impact that go beyond what we might immediately recognise in our descriptive accounts of social life. If this is the case, then we require a way of addressing them in order to work against the kind of reificatory thinking that Critical Theory puts forward as an ethical imperative arising from the problem of harm.

The question becomes how we might articulate those features of the social world that come about in a fashion that is more than merely contingent, a key feature of scientific activity. If all social situations are characterised by relationships of mere contingency that the theorist binds together narratively, they would not be real relationships at all, and social science would be impossible to consider. In general, this holds for the methods of science more generally; Archer considers that the methods of science, broadly construed and including those of falsification and induction, would be rendered unintelligible if contingent events pertained in a complete lack of internal relationships.[376] However, it is clear that science does work, and is intelligible given the clearly effective role it has played in the development of instrumental knowledge and production. As we have seen, Bhaskar indicates the way in which the social world may be amenable to similar (but not identical) methods,

[375] Ibid.
[376] Margaret S. Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 166.

thus leading to a social science in which the assumption of *some level* of social ordering is justified and necessary. The argument is that sociology can make the assumption that structuring forces are a relevant feature of the social world.[377]

If it is the case that social science makes the assumption of a structured reality that is not merely apparent, then its role with regard to the problem of harm is to make these structures more intelligible to subjects. This requires an engagement with the ontological question of what these structures are; if we do not know, any attempt at engaging normatively with the problem of harm would have no traction. In addressing the Critical Realist argument that the reality of social structures consists in their having causal powers that are relatively autonomous from the actions of individual agents, we are therefore engaging with the possibility of a link between the problems of object adequacy and critical value that was not resolved in the work of Linklater, and which could underpin an approach to social science compatible with the demands of Critical Theory.

Causation as a Key Aspect of Social Structure

In engaging with the existence of concepts such as social structure, it is necessary to demonstrate that there is, contrary to Harre's taxonomic categories, some way in which they exist historically such that the world would not be the same if they did not – that is, that they present an object of knowledge that exists objectively *outside* of our accounts. Arguing that structures emerge from patterns of social interaction, Archer claims:

> 'But what is it about X which leads us to attach the concept of 'emergence' to it rather than simply viewing X as the name given to the particular combination or permutation of A, B, C, N'? The crucial distinguishing property is that X itself, and itself being a relational property, has the generative capacity to modify the powers of its constituents in fundamental ways and to exercise causal influences *sui generis*.'[378]

Key parallels between the background elements of socialisation that were noted in the previous chapter and the ontological distinctiveness of social structure emerge from the

[377] Ibid., 167.
[378] Ibid., 174.

Critical Realist account. Social structures hold causal power due to the way that emergent properties are alienated from any particular individual or group; in Bhaskar's terms, there is an *ontological hiatus* between societies and people.[379] This is a key difference from the Eliasian argument in the previous chapter, and one that makes an idea of structural harm possible. While Elias' emphasis lay on the inseparability of people from social structures, the Critical Realist account emphasises their relative autonomy and causal power upon their constituent elements. While noting the importance of relational thinking, social structure is understood as an additional *level* of social life; not merely a conditioning factor, but an active component in causal complexes.

In terms of the game-metaphors that Elias was fond of, but contrary to his focus, the Critical Realist account notes that there are ways in which chess, or the waltz, persist over time as possible objects of knowledge even when they are not being played. Account for the way in which structured patterns of social behaviour are relatively durable over time demonstrates the necessity of an account of how subjects and structures relate in settings where their relative timescales are markedly different; there are features of society which pre-exist and post-date the lives of particular subjects that engage in the social activities they underpin. Characteristic of this mode of thinking is the Annales School of history, which focussed in a distinctive fashion on social life as a series of interaction across different objectively grounded frames of reference.[380] This kind of approach seems to offer one way that we might move past some of the problems that came with the Eliasian approach, in which the subsumption of shorter timescales under the longer had the consequence of potentially missing moments of great normative significance in the lives of subjects.

However, and in line with the insights Linklater's sociology offers, this ontological distinction can only ever be considered relatively autonomous due to the way that social structures are ultimately constituted by subjects and exist as a result of their activity. In this regard, the individualist focus criticised by both Elias and the Critical Realists retains some truth due to the way in which the statement 'no people, no society' still holds.[381] However, in engaging with the problem of harm, subjects conduct themselves through a society that is

[379] Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*, 3rd Revised edition (Routledge, 1998), 37.
[380] This can be seen in the work of the annales school of historiography, where the duration of differing 'times' between individual lifespans, social structures and so on were defined relatively. See Georg G. Iggers, 'Historiography in the Twentieth Century', *History and Theory* 44, no. 3 (1 October 2005): 472.
[381] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 30.

pre-given to them, whether in the form of artefacts, resource distributions or prior forms of knowledge; more broadly, they operate in the context of the actions of others, many of whom are long dead.[382] In this case, subjects refer to an objectivation, or real abstraction, of social forms that are structured in particular ways. In Linklater's argument, we saw that a capacity for recognising suffering played the role of a structured universal upon which the rest of the problem of harm was based; similarly, we can see the Rosetta Stone, or a library, as objects that require conceptualisation in order to decipher (and these conceptions can of course be wrong), but which hold and inherently structured form that dictates the potentials that they contain over time.[383]

These real abstractions are essential to the sociology of harm conventions, as it by engaging and labouring with them that it comes to contribute to the way that the problem of harm plays out in social life. More particularly, addressing generational problems across differing timescales such as climate change, oil stocks and biodiversity are central to the way that social science can contribute to normative deliberation.[384] In formulating an ontology suited to the way that society pre- and post-dates particular subjects, Bhaskar claims:

> "Now if society pre-exists the individual, objectivation takes on a very different significance. For it, conscious human activity, consists in work on *given* objects, and cannot be conceived as occurring in their absence. […] For all activity presupposes the prior existence of social forms. Thus consider *saying*, *making* and *doing* as characteristic modalities of human agency. People cannot communicate except by utilizing existing media, produce except by applying themselves to materials which are already formed, or act save in some other context. […] Even spontaneity has as its necessary condition the pre-existence of a social form with (or by means of) which the spontaneous act is performed. Thus if the social cannot be reduced to (and is not the product of) the

[382] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 143.
[383] Ibid., 99.
[384] Archer notes that there is 'a growing fund of properties upon which the future of human activity depends. Ibid., 144.

individual, it is equally clear that society is a necessary condition for any intentional human act at all."[385]

Social structure cannot be observed independently of the way in which it is tied up in the activities of particular subjects, and can only be understood as real through the way in which it acts, causally, upon those subjects. As we saw above, the distinction between 'causing' and 'conditioning', particularly with regard to social structure, does not undermine the ultimately causal nature of the argument. This bears strong similarities with Elias' rejection of linear causation for a focus on nexuses of multiple causes.[386] The fact that a given social structure or set of structures, by virtue of their pre-existence, are able to define the background against which a subject acts demonstrates the essential importance of understanding how these causal powers come to be exercised; in Linklater's terms, we are attempting to understand the ways that the problem of harm emerges historically.[387]

The Critical Realist Approach to Causation

Thus far, this chapter has made two key arguments. Firstly, the ontological hiatus between agents and structures demonstrates the possibility of structures as a discrete object of knowledge for the sociology of harm conventions in a way that can contribute to its critical value. Secondly, our inability to observe social structure outside of its interaction with agents ensures that any explanatory attempt must account for the way in which the two interact, which is necessarily causal in operation. Critical Realism attempts to develop the notion of cause so that it might operate more in line with the Eliasian understanding of multiple and complex causation. Contrary to the Humean argument that articulated causation as constant conjunction between atomistic events, this section will argue that the concept of causation requires extension into the non-empirical realm in this manner if it is to be of utility to the sociology of harm conventions. The attempt to move beyond empiricism is key to Bhaskar's critique of the epistemic fallacy, or the reduction of society to our knowledge of it.[388] If it is possible to move beyond the constant-conjunction model, it may be possible for the sociology of harm convention to contribute to debates concerning the problem of harm in a world where

[385] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 34. Italics in original. Objectivation in this sense differs from reification as it does not include the element of cognitive distance implied in the latter, but rather denotes the embodiment of the self in an external product.
[386] Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*, 46–47.
[387] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 66.
[388] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 133.

the constant conjunctions that would allow the formulation of causal laws are not apparent.[389] In doing so, it can begin to account for the kinds of contribution that, we have seen, various critical perspectives offer to the problem of harm; in highlighting the constitutive role that structures play in knowledge and practice, we can come to recognise the deep implication of many everyday practices in producing and reproducing harmful structures that preclude our understanding of the presuppositions upon which it depends.

As we have seen, there are many aspects of social life which lie outside of their immediate conceptualisation; ideas of structural harm articulate the way in which society continues to act upon us whether or not we know about it. In this context, Marx commented that there would be little need for science if there were no distinction between essence and appearance in social life.[390] As Elias' and Linklater's focus on unintended outcomes reveal, there are more consequences to social action than we know, and it is in this context that social science must address the nature of such unobservables. Our argument is that the Critical Realist framework can provide a basis for this in a way that the influential Humean viewpoint is unable to, particularly given the empiricist scepticism toward the ontological reality of causal claims.[391] This scepticism is grounded on the understanding of causation as a fabrication of mind; an epistemic leap that is made when constant conjunctions of observables are experienced in some way.[392] It is only this regularity that allows a a causal claim to be made, limiting the Humean argument reliance on a strict empiricism.[393] In restricting the foundation of knowledge to what it was possible to know about the world, Hume's approach to science restricts its basis to an epistemological one, with an understanding of the deep causal nature of the world remaining ultimately unknowable.[394]

The arguments put forward by Critical Realism attempt to demonstrate how scientific activity can address unobservable structures, thus providing a way that the sociology of harm

[389] Ibid., 125.
[390] criticalrealism.com, 'Roy Bhaskar Interviewed (Transcription)', *The Website for Critical Realism*.
[391] Kurki argues that the rejection of causal arguments in social science by the hermeneutic tradition has served to reinforce the Humean understanding of cause as the only game in town. Milja Kurki, *Causation in International Relations: Reclaiming Causal Analysis*, 1st Edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 60.
[392] A cause is defined by Hume as 'an object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are plac'd in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects which resemble the latter.' Cited in Ibid., 35.
[393] It is worth noting here that there is a debate in the literature regarding the distinction between what has come to be known as 'Humean arguments', and those things that Hume himself believed. For an appraisal of these, see Hidemi Suganami, 'Causation-in-the-World: A Contribution to Meta-Theory of IR', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 41, no. 3 (1 June 2013).
[394] Kurki, *Causation in International Relations*, 37.

conventions might come to buttress contentious accounts of abstract harm that run counter to received understandings. This rests on a transcendental argument that, through an understanding of the practice of science, seeks to decouple the equivalence between 'unobservable' and 'unknowable' in philosophy. The *reducto ad absurdum* that this equivalence leads to is made clear by Bhaskar:

> 'What distinguishes the phenomena the scientist *actually* produces from the totality of the phenomena she *could* produce is that, when her experiment is successful, it is an index of what she does *not* produce. A *real* distinction between the objects of experimental investigation, such as causal laws, and patterns of events is thus a condition of the intelligibility of experimental activity. And it can now be seen that the Humean account depends upon a misidentification of causal laws with their empirical grounds. Notice that as human activity is in general necessary for constant conjunctions, if one identifies causal laws with them then one is logically committed to the absurdity that human beings in their experimental activity, cause and even change the laws of nature! The objects of experimental activity are not events and their conjunctions, but structures, generative mechanisms and the like (forming the real basis of causal laws), which are normally out of phase with the patterns of events which actually occur.'[395]

This understanding is in line with the Eliasian argument for scientific detachment, and rests on the acknowledgement that the world operates regardless of the historically-contingent observability of a given scientific object. However, it also has consequences for Elias' focus on empirical testability as a way of combatting reification.[396] The model of open persons adopted by Linklater tends toward the acknowledgement of the stratification of people, but does not outline the way in which they are so. Understanding that object-adequate sociological knowledge must push beyond what we are able to observe indicates that sociology as a scientific endeavour needs to engage in far deeper analyses of the causal powers involved in social formations and open systems. In particular, it presents the possibility of investigating the potential causal powers of social structures that does justice to

[395] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 9.
[396] Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*, 203.

their influence beyond the concepts held by agents, thereby allowing us greater opportunity to account for forms of harm that lie outside of *status quo* narratives. This is achieved through the rejection of the constant-conjunction model for one in which the idea of cause is characterised by a unity of things, powers and properties and which centres on the *mechanisms* through which causation can be understood.[397] In doing so, it provides IS with an understanding of causation through which new concepts of harm might arise, making it particularly suited to the clarification of abstract forms of social interconnection.

Ontological monovalence – the single-level atomist ontology of the Humean philosophy of science – is replaced with an ontology that posits a stratified reality as a way of analytically separating the appearance of things from their essence. Science investigates these stratified properties and the relationship between them in a way that is real, and not merely imposed by an imaginative observer. This situates the process of observation against a reality in which causal powers can be real, actualised or empirical, thus restricting the empiricist case to a limited (and in the case of open or complex systems, very limited) domain when considered against the actual properties of objects. This accounts for the way that causal powers can be real but unexercised, exercised but unobserved or precluded, and exercised and observed. The real causal mechanisms that are observable in closed systems are those that inhere to the object, not merely a function of what we know about it. The domain of the actual takes this into account, attempting to demonstrate the multifaceted interaction of causal powers that occurs within open systems, such as society, where they are inevitably forced together in complex and little-understood ways. The empirical, however, is the point of Hume's prohibition of deep causal statements and can be considered as the point of experience through which the other domains may be indicated and point from which the epistemic fallacy proceeds.[398] In Bhaskar's argument, the domains are organised such that the domain of the real is greater than or equal to the domain of the actual, which is greater than or equal to the domain of the empirical.[399]

In line with the Eliasian focus on situating human knowledge against a broader context, Critical Realism argues for the removal of causal powers from their observability in a way that drastically undermines the scientific observer as the central tenet of

[397] S. Fleetwood and S. Fleetwood, 'The Ontology of Things, Powers and Properties', *Journal of Critical Realism* 8, no. 3 (2009): 343–66.
[398] Andrew Collier, *Critical Realism: An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy* (London; New York: Verso, 1994), 45.
[399] Or $D_r \geq D_a \geq D_e$. Bhaskar, cited in Ibid.

experimentation, instead putting them in a relational position with regard to their object of study. The aim of scientific engagement is to distinguish between internal and external relations between objects such that the discrete causal characteristics of emergent objects such as social structure can be uncovered. This process attempts to identify the aspects of an object that are necessary and internal to a given thing, or contingent and external.[400] Internal relations are those that are necessary for something to be itself and not another; whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, their continued existence is necessary to the reality of a thing. External relations are those that relate to the exercising of powers that it has by virtue of natural necessity; while inherent to the particular form through which a structure can be seen or experienced, their reality in a particular situation is not inherent to the thing as such. The differentiation between internal and external relations forms a foundational moment of critique; while the negative evaluation of class is something external to the argument as such, Marx's demonstration that class was internally related to the social formation of capitalism is the point which underlies the broadening of the critique of capital from individual instances of exploitation.[401] It is at this point in the Critical Realist argument that scientific knowledge of structures can contribute to the object-adequacy of our explanations. In bringing to light those causes that were not previously permitted by our ontology, it is therefore able to highlight new avenues for exploring social interactions as harmful including the forms of abstract harm that Linklater suggests.[402]

Causal enquiry therefore consists of an effort that aims at grasping the real causal powers and properties that constitute objects by abstracting from those elements that are contingent to it. However, in abstracting from contingent elements, we are also abstracting from important elements that characterise *particular* forms of exploitation. This exercise of judgement can only be advanced through means of a qualitative inquiry – what is it about *x* that allows *y* to happen? Such questions are given in a sociohistorical context that forms one basis for epistemological relativism in scientific enquiry due to the way in which it incorporates the position of the investigator relative to the object of concern.[403] Science remains limited by the technology and possibilities of particular historical eras, thus limiting

[400] Andrew Sayer, *Method in Social Science: Revised 2nd Edition*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2010), 89.
[401] Bhaskar cites Marx's argument that science is only necessary due to the distinction between essence and appearance. If everything was open to us, the penetrating and depth-oriented methods of science would become redundant. criticalrealism.com, 'Roy Bhaskar Interviewed (Transcription)'.
[402] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 38.
[403] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations : Critical Realism and the (Re)construction of World Politics.* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 136.

any notion of absolute truth. However, in deepening the notion of cause in this way, we begin to see the outline of how we might account for complex elements of social background within the sociology of harm conventions in a way that begins with a relatively universal concern with suffering. This allows us to emphasise the implication of social structures in day-to-day life in a way that articulates some of the core concerns that Linklater's idea of structural harm gives rise to.[404]

Broadening the Notion of Cause to Include Social Structure

Having put forward the Critical Realist argument for considering social structures as real, we can now situate this argument with regard to the effects of social structure in order to situate what is at stake in paying attention to the role of structures in harm. Typically, explanations of international politics have focussed most heavily on efficient causation, the pushing or pulling that is characteristic of understanding states as 'billiard balls'.[405] However, we have argued that the essential causal powers of objects ensures that our empirical experience of their interaction – most easily observable through the efficient cause – is not sufficient to provide a broader picture of causal powers and their interaction. The Critical Realist understanding of causation provides a basis for this broadening that does not fall into this pitfall.

Kurki provides an explanatory framework that is focussed on the nexus of causes, drawn from the work of Aristotle. The four-cause model encapsulates the oft-used efficient cause while also incorporating the material, formal and final causes in a way that holds potential for dealing with the complexity of open systems. The taxonomy given in the diagram below is useful due to the way in which it accounts for, and moves beyond, regularity theory as the basis for causal statements. The dichotomy presented between intrinsic and extrinsic causes demonstrates the way in which empiricism operates as a limitation on how we understand real objects. Through the adoption of a stratified ontology, it becomes possible to incorporate a broader notion of cause which may better articulate the relationship between the relative autonomy of agents and the social facts that are incorporated in their understanding of the problem of harm; furthermore, it incorporates the 'conditioning' and 'causing' dichotomy raised by Harre above.

[404] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 73.
[405] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 71.

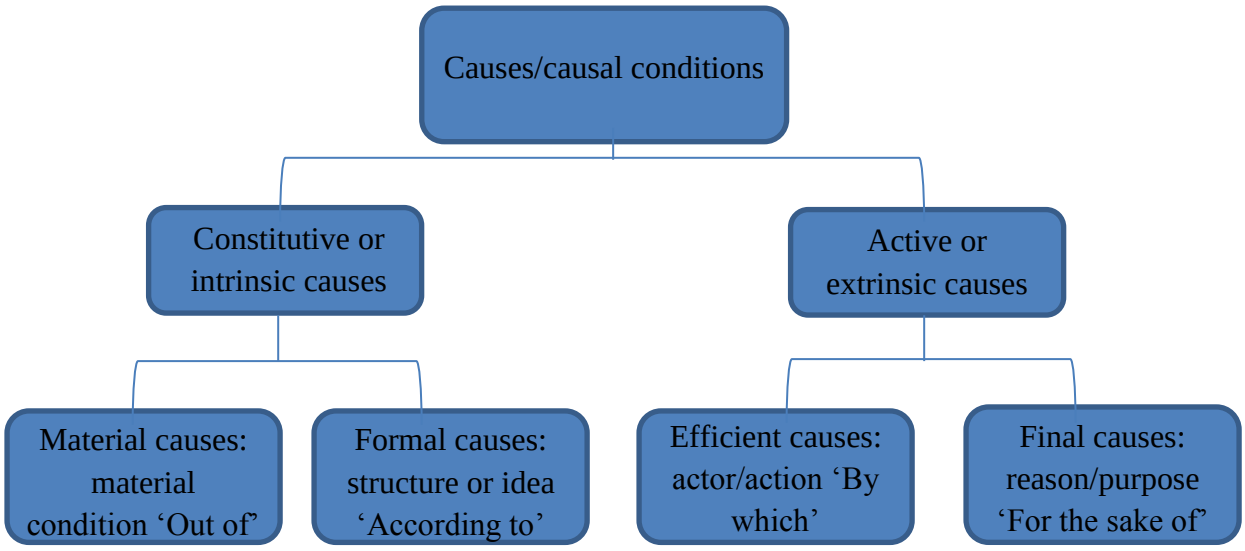

Fig. 1 Kurki's Aristotelian causal model.[406]

In the four-cause model, we also find an elaboration upon Bhaskar's claim regarding the inadequacy of prioritising human intentional causality, a key issue in approaching the myriad other factors that influence the course that ideas of harm take over time.[407] To the extent that social science is accounting for real causal powers that are exercised in the world, they operate against some background (material cause), and through some action (efficient cause). As social action is, furthermore, dependent on the concepts that agents hold and work with, this operates according to some pre-given (formal) idea, and for the sake of some reason (final cause). Rather than pure action, or even action pushing or pulling against some constraint, we find a more nuanced conception of how human intentional causation is able to operate in a world where both material and ideational forms are pre-given and causally efficacious, but at the same time are able to preserve the element of creative agency which characterises human activity and labour on worldly objects. In this regard, it does justice to Elias' model of open persons and provides a way that we can account for the disparity between potential sites of harm and actors' knowledge of them.

The attributing of causal powers to social structures in this way bypasses the objection that structures do not have agency by drawing a distinction between agency and causation that makes it possible to discuss society that does not reduce it to an aggregative collection of individuals. The idea of accounting for persons 'in the round' suggested by Elias attempts to

[406] Kurki, *Causation in International Relations*, 220.
[407] Harre, Rom and Bhaskar, Roy, 'How to Change Reality', 36.

draw attention to the way in which people are bound together, and in this formulation is laid out in a way that these relationships are complex but knowable. Furthermore, it maintains the avenue of causal enquiry by virtue of the incorporation of elements through which 'the ties that bind' are outlined on an ontological level which lends itself to social scientific observation. The use of a depth realist ontology leads to a way in which we might begin to isolate and explain causes in society, and not merely describe empirical phenomena. By once again beginning with the concept of social structure, the following sections will outline a basis for the reconstruction of key aspects of Linklater's historical sociology that is attentive to the concept of object adequacy and its link to critical value. In doing so, it seeks to formulate a way in the objects referred to in the sociology of harm conventions comes to have normative content.

The Critical Realist Concept of Social Structure and the Sociology of Harm Conventions

In reformulating Linklater's social ontology the chapter so far has defended a deep ontological understanding of causation that is intended to incorporate structural conditioning and meaningful human agency and, importantly, the relationship between them. The importance of this lies with the ability of social science to render intelligible sites of harm that are abstract with respect to the understanding of historically-placed subjects. Doing justice to these abstract factors rests on an acknowledgement of causation that goes beyond subjective intention and is based on the ontological properties of real things, i.e. their causal powers. This section seeks to lay out this relationship in the context of the sociology of harm conventions.

The onus of this question lies with the way in which we are able to speak of society beyond individuals in sociological discourse, and whether this is defined pragmatically by the theorist or in terms of a stratified and ontologically variegated whole which is not reducible to individuals. Thus far, our argument for this has rested on the differentiation in temporal terms between structures and agents. In this sense, the manner in which structures pre-exist agents and remain structured over time demonstrates this; the structure by which the factory worker come to be exploited pertains regardless of whether that role is fulfilled by Diane or by David. However, this section will argue that the broader and deeper notion of causal powers developed above links our attempts to reach object adequate articulation of the 'stuff'

of figurations directly to the critical import of social scientific knowledge. As such, it serves to link these two sites in a way that flows directly from the activity of scientific enquiry.

By positing the criteria of causation as the arbiter of the reality of objects, Critical Realists aim to move past the structure/agency debate and demonstrate that in the return from the peaks from abstraction, the theorist finds their analysis immersed in a complex world of causal forces and ontological differentiation that allows for a non-reductive account of the relationship between structure and agency. This form of explanation puts forward social structure as having internal tendencies that are of a particular form through which we can understand them as being not some other thing; this pattern marks the Critical Realist approach as placing ontological value on the concept of social structure that refuses to reduce the import of sociological knowledge to just another form of discourse. In short, it is not just that science produces knowledge, but that it produces knowledge *of something* and can be understood through its relationship to that thing. That this relationship is one of relative autonomy marks knowledge as *transitive* with regard to its relatively intransitive object.[408] It is in negotiating the relationship between transitive knowledge and intransitive knowledge that Critical Realism promises to articulate the possibilities that scientific knowledge presents for the problem of harm, allowing us a better understanding of how the knowledge produced in IS relates to its object.

A key aspect of the reconstructed sociology of harm conventions is its requirement of a concern with social structure as an objectively existing causal influence on the development of the problem of harm and the way it is addressed. This concern arises from the centrality of the concept of emergence in the Critical Realist account; while social structures and agents are real, the former are not autonomous but emerge from the actions of the latter. This provides an explanatory contrast to Elias' pragmatic concept of processes, incorporating that understanding of change over time but being more willingly to analytically separate elements of these according to the ontological properties of objects. That objects arise from other objects but are not reducible to them is described by Sayer:

> 'In such cases [of irreducible phenomena] objects are said to have '*emergent powers',* that is, powers or liabilities which cannot be reduced to those of their constituents. This phenomenon suggests that the world is not merely differentiated but *stratified*; the powers

[408] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 47.

> of water exist at a different stratum from those of hydrogen or oxygen. Emergence can be explained in terms of the distinction between internal and external relations.'[409]

Internal relations are those that must maintain if the object is to remain qualitatively what it is, as opposed to some different kind of thing; this maintains as much at the level of the social as it does at the realm of the natural science. As real things operate relationally to each other with regard to their causal powers, then it becomes necessary to acknowledge that there is some quality to the shape of those relationships through which distinct and particular sets of emergent powers may arise. Humans in particular warrant attention for the way in which the referentiality of social structures is capable of modifying behaviour, and the way that this can come about in a conscious manner.[410] The sociology of harm conventions, in its critical role of bringing to light new and unacknowledged forms of harm, can serve to explain these relationships in a way that highlights the structured nature of these relationships.

The insufficiency of Harre's taxonomic categories is insufficient due to the way that these emergent powers and properties are relatively enduring and do cannot merely be 'wished away'. The decisive move beyond the theorists of structure as 'virtual until instantiated' is made in Critical Realism is made when it is acknowledged that, within history, references to structure are always more than present-tense constructions. Due to human activity being reliant on already-existing materials, social structures are always constructed, as it were, out the materials of the past including the actions of the long dead.[411] However, contrary to the Eliasian argument, the reality of social structures opens up the possibility of our investigating them as *sui generis* objects and opens them up to evaluation with regard to the problem of harm. The concept of emergence, furthermore, is a presupposition of any form of social investigation whatsoever; in finding society as it is given to us, and being reliant on the actions of actors but also some broader social background, the process of emergence that the empiricists shied away from becomes much less mysterious.[412]

The density of relationships that we are studying when we examine the problem of harm can be understood through the model of internal relations with reference to Kurki's model of Aristotelian causes. Through this it is possible to characterise agency within society

[409] Sayer, *Method in Social Science*, 119. Emphasis in original.
[410] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 174.
[411] Archer here is making reference to Comte's claim to this effect. Ibid., 148.
[412] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 38.

through the common example of the sculptor, requiring each of the four causes if the block of marble is to become something else according to his or her intention. In this relationship, structurally emergent properties (SEPs) are those that are emergent from relationships involving some predominant material element that is pre-given, such as a distribution of resources or power relations.[413] In this way, the possible actions that an agent can take are limited due to the constraints given by these properties; it is not merely that one can 'wipe away' climate change or collectively 'wish away' the threat of nuclear weapons, but rather that they act in the context of climate change or the threat of nuclear weapons as real, abstract objects that exist in a structured way over time and with regard to some socially mediated concept. While recognising the implication of subjects in various harmful practices, the Critical Realist argument therefore allows us to account for the way in which intention constitutes only part of the problem of harm; in paying attention to the way in which structures contribute to harmful practices, we are able to account for the recalcitrance of structural influence in the face of our goals.

The Relative Autonomy Thesis

In considering the ways that structures can be said to pre-exist the actions of particular subjects, we encounter a claim that runs counter to the descriptive content put forward by Elias concerning the nature of figurations. The idea that structures (or games, to use Elias' analogy) do not have existence independently of the players can only be true to the extent that a structure is composed entirely of the actions that constitute it. This can be seen not to be the case, as the concepts held by subjects can be held separate to particular interactions; it is, for example, one possible outcome of the sociology of harm conventions to explain exploitation in general, and this does not require any particular person to be exploited and can be understood without taking part in the process of exploitation itself. While the process is perpetuated or transformed through the actions that take place during its enactment, the concept-dependency of social action requires that there is some further pre-given resource upon which the communicability of the actions we are referring to is based.

In order to take part in the process of contestation that we have termed the problem of harm, subjects must refer in an abstract sense to what constitutes it in order to render it

[413] The term adopted by Archer. See Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 177.

intelligible to others. While it may be the case that forms of harm do not exist, or are not enacted, where agents do not engage in them, they nonetheless continue to exist as abstract structures through the rules according to which it is constituted, and thus remains real in the Critical Realist sense but in a way that is not actualised. As such, these structures can be analytically distinct objects of knowledge that have a causal impact on the ways that agents engage with the problem of harm.[414] Furthermore, these objects of knowledge hold power over how, where and when behaviour is organised into particular fashions; agents refer to them in order to make sense of their social location and implication, and the problem of harm as described by Linklater lends an ethical quality to this engagement.[415]

It is this that forms a basis for the relative autonomy of social structure in a world where contingency often masks their deeper causal nature – the accounts of harm that we examined in the first chapter attempt to articulate this in a way that makes forms of harm clear despite the way that they do not occur 100% of the time. However, as their ultimate reality is to be based on the natural necessity of their internal relations, there is, in any case, a long list of actions which may call upon a structure without changing it at any deep level. The nature of social structures is therefore defined by a level of relative autonomy from the levels of stratification from which they emerged, and which is further complicated by the way that causal powers may be non-apparent or non-actualised. On this basis, Critical Realists have put forward the transformational model of social activity to describe the interaction between analytically distinct structures and agents. From Bhaskar's contribution to this area, Archer develops a morphogenetic approach in which:

> 'Society is not a simple cybernetic system, which pre-supposes a particular structure capable of carrying out goal directed, feedback regulated, error-correction. All of these are special kinds of system and society is another, which is only like itself and is itself because it is open, and is open because it is peopled, and being peopled can always be re-shaped through human innovativeness. Hence the use of the term 'morphogenesis' to describe the process of social structuring; 'morpho' indicating shape, and 'genesis' signalling that the shaping is the product of social relations. Thus 'Morphogenesis' refers to 'those processes

[414] As Margaret Archer argues for the Rosetta Stone. See Ibid., 99.
[415] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 87–90.

> which tend to elaborate or change a system's given form, state or structure'.[416]

The critical realist approach moves beyond conflationist theories inasmuch as it holds that society is both a necessary condition, and the outcome of, human agency in history. The circularity in Archer's statement above, that society is only like itself and can always be reshaped, rests on an understanding of the outcomes of human agency as the elements upon which the next cycle of human intentional activity is conducted. Thus agents engaging with the problem of harm both receive understandings through convention and socialisation, as well as interrogating the actions of past agents and reacting in light of their reflections. Participation in social life under this conception becomes a labour of production in a very real sense, as society provides the means for its reproduction through the very means which constitute it in the form of agents with the capacity for innovation and concept-led action.

The basis provided by the relative autonomy thesis allows forms of historical and sociological explanation that decentres the priority given to processes in the Eliasian account. This approach, labelled 'analytical histories of emergence' by Archer, works by drawing upon the essential Critical Realist question of what it is that makes a given social order possible, and is thus directed toward the constellations of internal relations that underlie contingent historical events. The stratification of society in analytical histories of emergence is further predicated on the relative autonomy thesis due to the way in which knowledge, as a historically changing product, need not be object-adequate for it to be practically adequate. Bhaskar's formulation, of the agent who often unknowingly produces and reproduces the social structures that form historical context is often not reliant on object adequate knowledge so much as a performative minimum that may be underpinned by mistaken understandings.[417] This offers significant support for accounts of abstract harm that, as Linklater notes, often operate in the context of unfavourable distributions of power in their attempt to highlight the legacy of, for example, colonial exploitation or the continued development of intensive production in the context of climate change.

As such, it remains a possibility that the direction of the causal tendencies held by a social structure may be quite different from those that it is understood, or believed, to have.

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[416] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 166. This is developed from Bhaskar's approach, which will not be discussed at length here as Archer's modifications have been broadly accepted in Critical Realist circles. Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 34. For Archer's comparison see Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 158.
[417] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 36.

The necessary participation of actors, therefore, does not preclude the relative autonomy of social structures in terms of their tendential direction and consequences.[418] Rather than the insufficient category of 'unintended consequences' which was utilised by Linklater to situate the direction of society as relatively independent of our expectations, Critical Realism allows us to implicate the causal basis of this direction in explanation. By placing the agent of such consequences in a world that exists relatively autonomous of them, we maintain a place for conceptual and creative action while not requiring that these concepts are object-adequate. Archer's morphogenetic sequence allows us to lay this out in more detail such that we can elaborate on the relationship of this knowledge to society further.

The Morphogenetic Sequence

Archer's formulation of the morphogenetic sequence provides us a way in which social science might analytically distinguish between agents and structures on the basis of their temporal differentiation and their relative historical transitivity.[419] In the sociology of harm conventions, this allows us to understand the way in which people contribute to the prevalence of particular harm conventions, but also receive others in a way that they have little part in initiating. This requires us to acknowledge the possibility that multiple actors can contribute at different times to the same social structure, or at least the same causal sequence. This process is demonstrated by Archer in the following diagram:

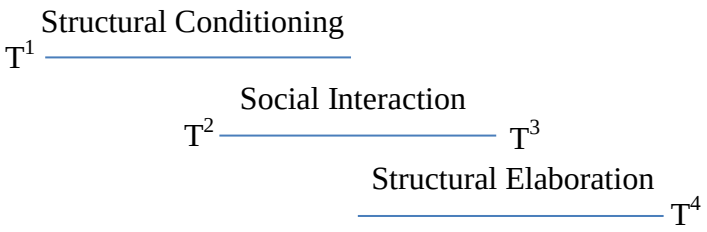

Fig 2: Archer's morphogenetic sequence[420]

[418] Note that such results come under the heading 'unintended consequences' in Linklater's sociology. While this may be the case, this does not exhaust their explanatory potential. Indeed, it is making up the deficit between intention and consequence that serves as one of the bases of the role given to the sociologist as a destroyer of myths by Elias. Mennell, *Norbert Elias: An Introduction*, 268.
[419] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 150.
[420] Ibid., 76.

The analysis proceeds through three timespans, each of which represents a pattern of interaction that pertains between different ontological strata. Each of these are considered as different orders of emergent properties, with first order emergent properties being the results of previous actions, second order the results of those results, and so on.[421] The 'tails' between T^1 and T^2, and T^3 and T^4, demonstrate the necessary pre-existence of structural conditions and the necessity of structural elaboration. Given that the process is a cycle (and therefore the 'tails' are the beginning/end points of other cycles), there is no point at which structure and agency are manifestly separated except for the sake of analytical distinction. Due to this, there is no way for the structural elaborations that agents engage with except in the context of material conditions which may restrain it, just as there is no structural conditioning that takes place in a concept independent manner. Development through different strata from the first order emergent properties that define pre-existing structural conditions to the elaboration of these conditions at the third order in morphostasis or morphogenesis demonstrates the importance of engaging with the generative mechanisms that constitute social structure. Such a formulation extends the way in which we are able to consider structural determination by reformulating it as the structural element that underlies all social activity; the study of structure in the sociology of harm conventions thus focusses as much on structures in harm as it does on structural harm *per se*.

An essential element of Archer's formulation lies in the way that there is no point at which society is un-structured.[422] In transposing the theoretical underlabouring of Bhaskar to the realm of sociological investigation, we find the basis for a social theory that transcends the debate between determinism and individualism by situating them relatively on different ontological strata. The object of sociology is not, therefore, to find results that reside on the level of agency or of structure, but rather to examine the real relationships between them.[423] This serves to highlight that any particular engagement with the problem of harm can only be understood as being continuous from, and preceding, other cycles. The process of structural elaboration, through which morphogenesis or morphostasis become actualised is

[421] Ibid., 325.
[422] Ibid., 158.
[423] This again reveals the core tension that operates in claims that sociology had moved beyond philosophical modes of questioning. While it is possible to defend the sociological enterprise on the basis of its essential object-orientation, this fails to move past questions of *how we talk about that*, particularly with regard to the extent to which our tools are object adequate. The statement that the relations that pertain within society (the object of sociology) are real does not automatically proceed to the claim that a given form of sociological knowledge is true *by virtue of this fact*. As was made clear in the first chapter, it is precisely the act of walking this line that is core to the activity of the social scientist as, in some way, legitimate.

simultaneously a process through which processes become part of the force of history, and allows us to recognise the way in which seemingly harmless everyday practices might contribute to broader forms of abstract and structural harm.

Paying attention to structure in this way allows us to formulate a response to critiques of determinism that have plagued many structuralist accounts of history and of society, in particular in light of the claim that men make a history that is not of their own choosing.[424] It is precisely that which pre-exists us that constitutes a determining force on agents in society while ensuring that they have the potential for creativity at all. While a certain level of determinism is pervasive due to the imperative of social reproduction, the relative autonomy of social structures allows such determining forces to operate at varying levels of stratification; while this force might be contingently or tendentially influential, it is equally true that they may be out of phase. On this basis, Potter defends Bourdieu as a kind of limited determinist who is both willing to acknowledge the importance of structural determination but also the creativity inherent in agency.[425] It is not that structure has to account for every actual outcome, but rather that agents make reference to things outside of themselves in their acts of spontaneity and creativity; even acts of spontaneity make reference to, and account for, a social background which is at least partially determined.

Archer's framework provides a rich concept of social structure that allows an acknowledgement of tendential influence in open systems. In engaging with, creating and recreating ideas of harm, agents are not reduced to the demands of internal relationships or social roles; indeed, the long and complex biographies that are carried with us are themselves emergent properties that react in various ways to the positions we find ourselves filling. In most cases, this nexus of emergent properties is exponentially more complex than what is required or defined by the role as such, introducing tensions and points of conformities that are far from mechanically or functionally defined. Within the Critical Realist framework this does not mean that structures do not exist, but rather that they continue to exist in a way that is either non-actualised or not empirically accessible; nonetheless, they provide a continued object of knowledge that can be factored into our sociological accounts. In examining the various forms of structural conditioning, we will see that its subtle effects upon social interaction may be flouted or moved beyond, but in a way that holds reference to the causal

[424] Karl Marx, 'The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' 1852.
[425] Garry Potter, 'For Bourdieu, Against Alexander: Reality and Reduction', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 30, no. 2 (2000): 229–246, doi:10.1111/1468-5914.00127.

powers involved as real and which is important for our accounts whether they are manifested or not. As such, the ability to provide accounts of such structures is one of the key points at which International Studies can contribute to reflection on practices in social life.

From Conditioning to Social Action

To further elaborate upon this claim, it is important to note some of the ways in which structure may influence the behaviour or agents and provides the preconditions of social action such that it always takes place with reference to structured historical conditions. This allows us to understand social structure as a key aspect of the kind of social explanation that the sociology of harm conventions engages with. Once again, the key points to be made are the analytic differentiation of structure and agency and the stratified nature of social reality. While the differentiation of structure and agency permits an analysis of the way we might account for structures when engaging with the problem of harm, it is the broadening of the concept of causation that provides our ability to flesh this out empirically. The four-cause model addressed above thus provides us with a way of accounting the complex ways in which social structure becomes implicated in daily life.

The argument thus far has highlighted that the world into which we are thrown is characterised by the pre-existence of structures that are the result of actions that have gone before. It is this that is the 'stuff' of society that is given to us, with all its consequent emergent powers and history, as the basis for social interaction and which may go beyond our knowledge of it; failings in our knowledge may concern the nature of this inheritance and its tendencies.[426] Applying this idea to the concepts of harm that actors elaborate, we can understand agents as proposing them in the context of their position, and reflections upon this position, within various social structures. This process of reflection is what we have suggested is the role of International Studies with regard to the problem of harm. It may be the case that a given agent can move from one social position to another, thus adopting a different stance with regard to society, but such a move is always from one set of objective conditions to another.[427] This is what Bhaskar understands as the position-practice system, or the point at which we can understand contributions to the problem of harm to be actualised in

[426] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 67–71.
[427] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 202.

the bridging of structure and agency.[428] The relational nature of such a system ensures that the received aspect of what people understand as harm does not merely reflect what they have received, but places it in relation to a set of historically mediated interests that are drawn from their position within history.

Developing the position-practice system further, we can see that the pre-given nature of a social position is likely to incur costs should one, in the process of structural elaboration, choose to move between positions. This can be clearly seen, in a monetised form, in the 'Fair Trade premium' that a consumer pays when deciding to consume Fair Trade goods.[429] Such constraints are emergent from previous actions undertaken, themselves arising from previous actions, and so on. More particularly, the structuring of possible movements within the position-practice system outlines these opportunity costs in a general sense by mapping the paths it is possible to take through society. The sociology of harm conventions can be seen as aiming toward an ethical dimension to this process of mapping centred upon the problem of harm. In cases such as these, the costs associated by consuming Fair Trade goods – in this case, monetary – are a function of the consumer being able to shoulder the additional financial burden or adjust their pattern of consumption to suit; this, of course is a function of the position of the actor vis-à-vis the cost of the goods, of which competency in ethical decision making can only be understood as a part.

While the above examples lay out some basic ways in which a subject may be conditioned with respect to the objective position they find themselves in, the positon-practice system also provides some insight as to positional dispositions with regard to other actors in society. While conflict, negotiation and others are not purely a function of structural conditioning, it is not easily possible to separate out, from the point of view of social science, the system from the lifeworld; the question is one of objective and ontologically given properties that are presented to, and woven into the being of a given subject. Indeed, with regard to Fair Trade, the rendering of the 'Fair Trade Premium' as a monetary cost with a definable price tag is one form of adaptation to modes of decision making *already* familiar to the consumers the products are targeting. In this regard, the position and trajectory of actors at least partly contributes to their dispositions in social interaction, and so strategic action is at least partially pre-conditioned by the situational logic that reflections on social structure

[428] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 41.
[429] Fair Trade International, 'Benefits of Fair Trade'.

can reveal.[430] While this may be seen as a kind of ideal-typification, the key point to be made is that there is a strong historical basis that underpins contemporary outcomes. In particular, the ability to negotiate the problem of harm, indeed to comprehend the ways in which it is possible to negotiate it, is the result of previous morphogenetic sequences and structural elaboration, as well as being related to other external and contingent relationships.

Taking the structuring of social life as a real factor to be accounted for by the sociology of harm conventions allows us to enquire into the nature of these relationships, which can be demonstrated through four ideal-typical examples. The first of these, internal complementarity, can be understood as a necessary relationship that serves to reinforce the integration of social order. This leads to a disposition toward protection in the strategic action of agents.[431] In the example of Fair Trade, its adoption of a market pricing mechanism that rests on the consumer choosing to pay a premium can be understood as compatible with the broader market system, although this relationship has in no way been a simple one.[432] Nonetheless, it is in harmonising its basic principles with those of the market that Fair Trade became widely acknowledged ethical movement.[433]

The second of these is internal incompatibility, in which the state of the social form is reliant on a particular underlying tension, as in the case of Marx's conception of class struggle. Antecedent sequences, in this case, form the prior distribution of resources upon which the current state of the struggle is based with behaviour being influenced by the power gradient that pertains at the time.[434] The pattern of strategic interaction in this case has the potential to reveal ruptures in the social fabric in a way that is self-revealing to a far greater extent than the other situational logics, and which can serve as the basis for historical action aimed at moving beyond the structured *status quo*. This, furthermore, is what leads Bhaskar's argument for the methodological primacy of the pathological which, in the case of the sociology of harm conventions, leads directly back to the possibility that the social sciences

[430] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 218.
[431] See Harvey's discussion of the commodity form and its internal relations. 'Reading Marx's Capital Vol 1 - Class 2, Chapters 1-2', *Reading Marx's Capital with David Harvey*.
[432] Anna Hutchens, *Changing Big Business: The Globalisation of the Fair Trade Movement* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2010).
[433] Laura T. Raynolds, 'Mainstreaming Fair Trade Coffee: From Partnership to Traceability', *World Development* 37, no. 6 (June 2009): 1083–93.
[434] This is at the core of Elias' conception of functional democratisation. Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 109.

might operate as an interlocutor with suffering subjects and their engagement with the problem of harm.[435]

While the first two examples rest on ideas of harm being internal to a given social form, external relations also pertain that are causally efficacious but not necessary for a social system to be what it is. As such, accounts of social structure need to be open to potentially radical change which can be reinforcing (compatible) or disruptive (incompatible). The first of these leads to a situational logic of appropriation, through which the portrayal of factors as falsely *internal* can reinforce the action underpinning society more broadly. The second leads to a situational logic of elimination on the part of vested interests due to the potentially disruptive way in which it can impact upon pre-given structural relationships.[436]

These examples are given in order to demonstrate that the lack of an object-adequate conceptual framework on the part of actors does not necessarily derail the integrative capacity of social action. While actors in most times and in most places have needed a concept of harm in order to hold society together, as Linklater notes, we would argue that the scientific correctness of this concept does not matter as much as its practical adequacy.[437] In short, the performative minimum that is required of actors in highly integrated societies does not just through the social inculcation of concepts but is inherent to the structured life of a society and the relative positioning of its actors. As such, the process of social interaction that we understand as the problem of harm is not merely a discursive construction, but a broader negotiation that shifts the constitution of subjects habitus' with a degree of reflexivity with regard to agents' social position, and it is the role of the sociology of harm conventions to enhance that degree of reflexivity in an object-adequate fashion. In this regard, it becomes clear that gaining an understanding of the deep seated structural positioning and historical trajectory of actors requires a concept of structure if it is to fully articulate the stratified layers of social being. This is not to prioritise one structure over another, but merely to put forward the way in which they may interact in complex ways that require disentangling if the political consequences of our social accounts are to be made clear.

In expanding on the idea of social structure, the Critical Realist account provides a way for us to investigate the points at which the *homo clausus* subject is necessarily underpinned by involvement in social structures but also, through abstraction, is able to

[435] Collier, *Critical Realism*, 165.
[436] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 226.
[437] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 29.

engage with them in a positive sense. It should be emphasised once more that the objective positioning of social structures is not determinist, but serves to represent causally-efficacious dispositions that may be followed, overcome or altered in the process of structural elaboration. This is in line with the character of Eliasian dispositional concepts such as functional democratisation but shoulders an additional burden due to the way in which it highlights avenues for potential social strange in the activity of abstraction. While the Eliasian method tended toward the destruction of myth by demonstrating the links between subjects and their interdependence, a further push is needed toward an attitude that serves to critique the position of a subject within society as an ontologically distinct object, a task that is fulfilled in Bhaskar's framework through the category of totality.[438] As was indicated in the final stages of the previous chapter, it is only in examining the quality of the links between subjects that we can understand sociological knowledge as having critical value based on its object adequacy, and thus make the link between the two that our reconstruction has aimed toward.

Processes, Critical Realism and the Problem of Harm

The Critical Realist approach argues that processes are real in the sense that they are causally efficacious along the lines of Kurki's diagram above. While the aim of sociological accounts is not prediction, the understanding of processes as causal is necessary if it is to have any explanatory value other than that of mere allegory; the sociology of harm conventions thus makes processes intelligible as a way of highlighting avenues by which they might be maintained or deviated from. From the forms of structural conditioning examined above, we can see that this operates in a context in which social forms may promote or resist forms of change in ways that are irreducible to the actions of agents. This is in line with Linklater's argument that engagement with the problem of harm may be somewhat more difficult when it concerns issues that are stabilised by particular concentrations or gradients of power, but also highlights a possible avenue for bringing them within the realm of intentional activity.[439] While it would be impossible to conceive of a society without people, the key point to be made lies with the fact that any conception of reality must be more than those people themselves, lying in their relative emergent properties; any understanding of

[438] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 43.
[439] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 229.

process must operate in a broader relationship to the social totality than the changing characteristics of agency over time.

As with the earlier distinction between structures and agents along temporal lines, the analysis of process must be understood according to its dimension in time as a necessary element of explanation. Causal explanation, in its Humean form, is rightly rejected by both Critical Realists and Eliasians under these circumstances due to its 'time slice' presentation of temporally differentiated social situations and reliance on constant conjunctures of events. Without a definite link, the processes explained in the sociology of harm conventions would necessarily be limited to the mind of the theorist and are therefore limited to aesthetic judgements; by adopting the Critical Realist framework, it is instead the case that causal explanation can be taken seriously in an ethical sense because the objects it refers to are real. We can therefore distinguish between empirical processes and real processes such that their utility can be understood along the lines of the Realist idea of transitivity/intransitivity. Empirical processes, as per the Humean argument, are necessarily constructed in the mind of the observer and are apparent to us in the domain of the empirical. In this regard, they form part of knowledge which is transitive with regard to its object. The Eliasian framework is limited to this domain due to its modelling of object-adequacy as a function of the 'involvement' or 'detachment' of the social scientist. Real processes, by contract, necessarily operate along causal lines and require a mode of explanation that is not limited to the empirical domain; it is this insight that the Realist reconstruction of the sociology of harm conventions offers. This insight, it should be noted, is not possible without introducing 'transcendental hangovers' that enquire as to the nature of unobservables in a way that we saw Kilminster reject in the previous chapter.[440]

This allows us to consider the element of change that is at stake in process-based thinking. In particular, the relationship between processes of qualitative and quantitative change is heavily linked to what has been described as the morphogenetic sequence; the quantitative proliferation of a new idea of harm always occurs in the context of some previous distribution of ideas and material capabilities, taking up a stance with regard to them in a more-or-less creative fashion. Importantly, this may occur at various ontological levels that are not necessarily directly observable or conscious. The tendency for structures to provide a basis for their own re-enactment in terms of knowledge recalls Marx's claims

[440] Kilminster, 'Norbert Elias's Post-Philosophical Sociology: From "Critique" to Relative Detachment', 108.

regarding the proliferation of needs as they are conditioned by the positioning function of social structures.[441] Indeed, this process is one component of the cultural, geographic or technological specificity that the problem of harm takes on in different historical situations, and which leads it to vary so widely.[442] The disjuncture between subjective viewpoints and real economic processes lies at the heart of the Marxist critique of capitalist society with regard to the essence and appearance of the commodity form, an insight that is carried into the Critical Realist understanding of how social science operates.[443] Again, the sociological enterprise in this formulation concerns a clarifying of the relationships that constitute society and social action. In this, it relies on the distinction between structure and agency, and the accompanying difference in methods and modes of knowledge formation, to the extent that it considers 'society' an object of knowledge at all.

In reformulating the sociology of harm conventions along Realist lines, the rejection of Humean causal enquiry does not lead to the rejection of causal enquiry *per se*. However, and acknowledgement of causation as an important issue in social science necessitates a broader acceptance of the broader Critical Realist agenda, including the taking of structure as having objectively real causal powers and potentials. This provides a ground upon which the sociology of harm conventions is able to consider categories of structural harm, and also to consider the role of structures *in* harm as part of a broader strategy of explanation. Structurally focussed theories gain their salience through an explanation of practices that move beyond what is empirically observable toward an understanding of the objective consequences of adherence to particular social forms. In doing so, however, they necessarily acknowledge process due to the way that historical enquiry is located in and focussed on the relationship between particular outcomes and the more general form to which they relate; it is not, however, necessarily the case that they are focussed on *all* processes. Indeed, claiming so was a key drawback of the Marxist legacy.[444]

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[441] "Marx distinguishes […] two types of human drives and appetites: the constant or fixed ones, such as hunger and the sexual urge […] which can be changed only in their form and the direction they take in various cultures, and the "relative" appetites, which are not an integral part of human nature but which "owe their origin to certain social structures and certain conditions of production and communication." Erich Fromm, 'Marx's Concept of Man', *Marxists.org Archive*, 1961.

[442] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 32.

[443] Bhaskar cites approvingly Marx's claim that if there was no difference between essence and appearance, there would be little use for science and critique. criticalrealism.com, 'Roy Bhaskar Interviewed (Transcription)'.

[444] Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory', 49.

Critical Realism and Scientific Practice

Having highlighted some of the differences between the Critical Realist reconstruction put forward here and Linklater's sociology of harm conventions, it is possible for us to highlight the key condition that permits the Critical Realist framework to make a link between object adequacy and critical value in its engagement with the problem of harm. While Linklater's evaluative standard of discourse ethics remains a feasible (though highly formal) formulation of the ideal standard for the negotiation of harm conventions, a focus on these negotiations draws attention away from the critique of social structures that the sociology of harm conventions seeks to inform. In arguing for this second axis, we are arguing for the contribution of social scientific knowledge to the way in which the problem of harm is engaged in; it is not merely another voice in the debate, but a particular perspective with its own set of values and problems. By demonstrating the way in which knowledge of social structures is possible, if tentative, the Critical Realist approach provides us with a new perspective on the threefold problematic, in which the problem of harm is considered from the viewpoint of knowledge production. The result, we will argue, is to complement the intersubjective focus of discourse ethics with a mode of critical engagement that arises from the knowledge produced in processes of social scientific enquiry.

Contrary to the 'hard' dichotomies that characterise traditional International Relations (domestic/international), Critical Realism puts forward a stratified and emergent reality according to which these distinctions make sense only at the analytical moment and in proportion to the underlying reality.[445] Substantively, the power of social scientific explanation lies in the ability to trace the real causal powers and relations between complexes and entities, the relatively autonomous spheres of which are capable of causally efficacious and mediated interpenetration. In this context, the redescription and reformulation that is part and parcel of scientific practice takes on the role of expanding world-views in a way that challenges our categories through a confrontation with what previously escaped them. The first form in which scientific knowledge contributes to the Eliasian 'destruction of myth' is, therefore, the way in which explanations sit in relation to other explanations, and which can be considered critical by definition. This is in line with Linklater's approach to the sociology of harm conventions which highlights the necessity of informing engagement with the

[445] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 36. Patomäki considers the history of IR as a cycle of reification concerning this distinction.

problem of harm through less involved explanations.[446] In accounting itself to the properties of objects first and foremost, Critical Realism allows us to understand the hunter-of-myths in ontological, rather the purely epistemological, terms.

This practice, through which the formulation of empirical knowledge allows the passing from empirical statements to statements concerning values, is intrinsic to explanation in Critical Realism due to the way in which beliefs form a constitutive element of the object of social scientific study.[447] This forms a further point at which the destruction of myth occurs, and where Critical Realism draws a critical edge from the values inherent to scientific activity. If the reproduction of social structures requires concept-dependent action, then the production of more object-adequate explanations can be understood as critiquing and aspect of them directly.[448] It is possible, therefore, for empirical claims not merely to improve the engagement with institutions, but to critique those institutions as such. This point is clarified by Collier with regard to particular social institutions or real abstractions, such as the wage-form, which themselves are involved in the reproduction of false belief either contingently or internally to the social form.[449] In light of explanations that are false or inadequate, it therefore becomes necessary to produce better explanations and thus follow a critical strategy of explanation with normative content.[450] In addition to Linklater's orientation of normative engagement toward the democratic negotiation of the problem of harm, this reconstruction argues that work following Bhaskar draws attention to the values inherent in scientific practice which lay rest on the subject/object axis. In general, the contribution of Critical Realism to the sociology of harm conventions lies in its *decentring of the object*, as opposed to the *decentring of the subject* that occurred with intersubjective-focussed ontologies.[451]

However, there are points at which the work of the social sciences is more complex than the natural sciences – the former necessarily engages with society as an open, rather than

[446] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 262.
[447] Collier, *Critical Realism*, 171.
[448] On the basis that reasons can be causes. Ibid., 118–20.
[449] Ibid., 172.
[450] Jonathan Joseph, 'How Critical Realism Can Help Marxism', in *Critical Realism and Marxism*, Critical Realism: Interventions (Routledge, 2002), 37.
[451] '[…] you've got rid of the unified subject, but you still want the unified object, you still want this non-existent stone out there. Why can't we disaggregate the notion of the object' Cited in Neil Curry, 'Beyond the Marxism/post-Marxism Divide', in *Critical Realism and Marxism*, Critical Realism: Interventions (Routledge, 2002), 126.

a closed system subject to experimentation.[452] Bhaskar's argument leads to a process consisting of four stages. The first of these is the resolution of an event into its components, consisting of causal analysis. The second is the redescription of component causes. Thirdly, retroduction and the development of analogies is used to move to possible antecedent causes of components via normic statements, finally followed by the elimination of alternative possible causes.[453] This process, in proportion with the plurality of possible causes, can be understood as articulating the importance of new concepts for understanding harm and which rest to some extent on the historical and hermeneutic basis of such theorising. The result is a model which remains open to challenge both the objective and intersubjective levels, but most importantly carries ontological import due to its world disclosing character; the values at stake in the contribution that the sociology of harm conventions makes are not arbitrary, but drawn from the real experience of the marginalised in society. The similarities between the realist account and that provided by Elias is apparent once it is realised that this can 'increase the range of real non-utopian) human possibilities which may, of course, also mean decreasing the range of imagined ones, by showing certain of these to be purely imaginary.'[454] This is functionally identical to Elias argument for a relationship between detached and object-adequate knowledge, but in addition offers a broader ontological account of the kinds of objects social science can make a difference to.[455]

There are three major characteristics of scientific activity found in the Critical Realist framework that bear directly on the position of social science with regard to the problem of harm, and which are put forward by Collier. Firstly, the social sciences are explanatory sciences and do not make pretence concerning their predictive potential. Secondly, they are sciences without closure. Thirdly, they carry hermeneutic premises.[456] Each of these can be related directly to the problem of harm as it relates to knowledge production in the threefold problematic:

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[452] The original model will not be discussed at length here, and focus will be placed on Bhaskar's extension of Critical Realism to the social sciences in *The Possibility of Naturalism*. However, Bhaskar focuses on the productive element of experimental activity which is centred on the artificial closing of systems, without which regularities are extremely rare. Because of the reflexivity and concept-dependency of social interaction, society cannot be closed in such a way as to produce an experimental generalisation. Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 127–29.

[453] Patomäki considers the various forms this may take in considering the process of iconic modelling. See Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 123.

[454] Bhaskar, cited in Collier, *Critical Realism*, 189.

[455] Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 161.

[456] Collier, *Critical Realism*, 161.

- The problem of object adequacy: There is a hard limit on object adequacy placed on the social sciences by the complexity raised by society as an open system. The discipline is, therefore, fundamentally limited in its approach to the problem of harm in a predictive sense, and instead should place its focus on rendering the preconditions of forms of harm in a more intelligible fashion. In particular, this activity rests on the important task of elucidating the structured elements of social life, thus clarifying the role of social structure in harmful practices.
- The problem of critical value: Attempts to 'make the leap' to critical and normative value that arises from the social sciences should be understood to have a fundamental limit based on object adequacy. Given historical limits, critique cannot be understood as final or definitive, but instead offers a provisional account upon which strategic action can be formulated and which begins with the priority of suffering.
- The problem of reflexivity: The problem of harm constitutes a site through which subjects can reflect on their orientation toward ideas of harm and their relation to those of others. This permits greater object adequacy in our ideas of harm because, under the Critical Realist formulation, the causal effects of particular practices become understood in a less subject-centred and more detached fashion.

The development of science, on the Critical Realist model, takes place within historical processes and can only be understood as a social activity. Given the changing nature of scientific knowledge over time, the necessary corollary of ontological realism is epistemological relativism. This is not to indicate that one explanation is as good as any other, but rather that given the ontological import of scientific practice, a final principle of judgemental rationalism is employed to mediate the historical relationship between subject and object.[457] As such, it does not seek to replace the involvement/detachment balance in sociological enquiry, but provides a further axis upon which we can understand the kinds of accounts that International Studies produces in its engagement with pre-given concepts and ideas of what harm is or should be.

The social scientist who engages with the problem of harm, as we have argued is often the case in International Studies either explicitly or implicitly, is engaged in formulating *transitive* knowledge, or concepts of harm, against the background of a relatively *intransitive* object, that of suffering. Key aspects of judgement are called upon in this process,

[457] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 155.

necessitating a form of reflexivity that relates back both to the self, the object of study and other subjects. What is gained in this formulation is a form of ideology critique that lacks Marx's economic focus, and through which both other explanations and social institutions, structures and so on can become the object of critique.[458] While the scientific and normative enterprise – object adequacy and critical value respectively – were found to be separated in Linklater's account, under this reconstruction they are internally related such that values bearing on the problem of harm are maintained as central to scientific activity.

In presenting this model of science, striking parallels arise with Elias' research program as it was presented in the third chapter. While the philosophical basis adopted by Critical Realism runs counter to much of Elias' rejection of that form of enquiry, we saw that this merely pushed the problems placed by philosophy back into an unreachable future. Adopting the ontology put forward here results instead in us being able to articulate the ties that bind in a way that incorporates a nuanced and shifting causal analysis at the core of our sociological enterprise while still retaining a theory of normatively engaged social action. This allows us to highlight once again our understanding of International Studies as engaging with the problem of harm; it is not that this is an *extension* of this form of ethical concern to the social sciences, but rather that the social sciences carried this ethical concern all along. Contrary to the detachment put forward by process sociology, the Critical Realist position reveals an emancipatory impulse inherent to scientific activity which we have identified as key to an engaged approach to the problem of harm. This approach, rather than treating the 'correctness' of scientific accounts and their normative value separately, relates them so that the investigatory activity of the social sciences constitutes an ethically charged engagement with the world.

This illustrates the way that the ontological questions provoked by Critical Realism bear directly on the problem of harm as it has been discussed throughout this thesis; the concepts of harm it is possible for us to have is related directly to the question of the objects that constitute social reality. Being attached to any number of social meanings, objects and power dynamics, the problem of harm is therefore deeply related to our understanding of social life, and relies in turn upon the properties of its constituents.[459] Ontological problems are therefore deeply political due to the way that they fulfil the preconditions for forms of

[458] Ibid., 152.
[459] Matthew Fluck, 'The Hardest Service: Conceptions of Truth in Critical International Thought' (Aberystwyth, 2010), 213.

social engagement, making it the role of the social sciences to engage with and disclose these elements of background understanding and their ethical implications. The critical task of process sociology focuses on the presentation of the world and its interconnection in a similar way such that people might become better attuned to the circumstances they find themselves in. In parallel to this, Sayer argues:

> "In response to this kind of endless fact-gathering about behaviour, radicals often echo Marx by protesting that 'the point is to change it'. But they do not mean the social engineering kind of change but an internal process of reduction of illusion and emancipation. As long as knowledge is estranged from people and seen as externally descriptive rather than constitutive of human action, the radical reply will seem obscure in its justification and hence appear as mere assertion. […] But if we recognize that 'science' itself is a practice – and one dependent on adherence to certain values – and that social objects include other knowing subjects, the emancipatory goal cannot in principle be denied without contradiction.'[460]

The critical aspect of science is inherent to its activity due to the way in which a given explanation, in improving upon one previously given, necessarily criticises and transcends it predecessor due to the way in which it occupies the same objectively given world. Moreover, if scientific endeavour is considered as a social practice, the task of science is one of world disclosure; its results are not merely some new truth, but some new truth that operates in a relationship to its real object of study.[461] Inasmuch as normative concepts are embodied in and performed by arrangements and institutions etc., it is entirely possible for explanations to perform a critical function in taking up a position relative to them. Due to its ontological basis, there is a 'weight' to the explanations provided under the Critical Realist model which operates as more than 'just another voice' in the debate, but which can serve to renegotiate the ground upon which our epistemological processes and judgements depend.

[460] Sayer, *Method in Social Science*, 253–54.
[461] Axel Honneth, 'The Possibility of a Disclosing Critique of Society: The Dialectic of Enlightenment in Light of Current Debates in Social Criticism', *Constellations* 7, no. 1 (1 March 2000): 116–27.

Conclusions

The Critical Realist approach to social science puts forward ontology, or what there is, as an essential aspect of enquiry and in doing so resists the *a priori* dominance of the knowing subject in a way that parallels the arguments of the critical theorists. In doing so, it highlights the possibility that a distinction between suffering and our knowledge of it can serve as a ground for social scientific engagement in International Studies from which it might contribute to the amelioration of harmful practices. Following this, we argued that the sociology of harm conventions can benefit from this form of enquiry as a way of understanding the role that the 'weight of history' plays in the negotiation, formation and maintenance of harm conventions, in particular with regard to structural and abstract social forces. This allows a more adequate explanatory strategy that is sensitive to the needs of key marginalised subjects, particularly in the context of situations where an embedded *status quo* ensures the asymmetry of the way the problem of harm plays out. Despite the problem of reification that we saw in Chapter 2, it remains the case that social science is an important avenue through which the stratified relationship of subjects to various aspects of historical processes can be better understood, if only asymptotically. While it may be the case that suffering is, in this regard, incommunicable in an absolute sense, it is precisely an understanding of stratification and historical position that allows some, however limited, translation between contexts in social scientific explanation.

This approach arises from a reformulation of two major points in Linklater's sociology of harm conventions. Firstly, the Eliasian approach to relative detachment as a key aspect of scientific knowledge was supplemented by an ontological stance that seeks to account for the broader social world as much as it does the qualities of our knowledge of it. In doing so, it attempts to move beyond the epistemic fallacy identified by Bhaskar.[462] This approach maintains the recalcitrance of the world in the face of our goals while not then assuming the strict determinism of structural forces; such causal powers are always relational. The second is to argue that the knowledge produced in the social sciences is always knowledge of something. The use of sociological knowledge always operates in an intersubjective context, as Patomaki argues.[463] However, it is important to account for the way that knowledge develops in relation to the object to which it refers; as such, ontological questions such as those raised by the role of social structures in harmful practices, and how

[462] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 133.
[463] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 158.

we account for them, constitute important avenues for sociological enquiry. These points, taken together provide a deeper understanding of the way that the sociology of harm conventions relates to the world by more adequately characterising the objects that it refers to, and opens up the possibility that International Studies can contribute to debates centred on harm by providing accounts of structural determination. In doing so, it once again links object adequacy and critical value such that the way in which IS can contribute to the problem of harm becomes formulated as a form of explanatory critique; both an enhancement of Linklater's normative standard and a way of including engagement with the difference between harm and suffering as one of the key contributions of Critical Theory to the way we understand the problem of harm.

This approach also has a more general impact on the way that we understand the work of social science, which holds out a further contribution to Linklater's Eliasian approach. The Critical Realist formulation puts forward the activity of science as being a form of production that is both socially and historically delimited. If the production of knowledge is relatively transitive with regard to its object, and objects can be relatively independent from our knowledge of them, then we are forced to accept the relativity of our beliefs concerning the problem of harm and how it relates to suffering. The knowledge produced in social scientific activity, therefore, cannot be understood as having absolute value, but rather operates as one value among others in the negotiation process that we have put forward as the problem of harm. This is in line with Linklater's understanding of how the problem of harm operates as one value of the many that would comprise a cosmopolitan ethic.[464] In this regard, any ethical implications that arise from scientific activity are tentative and subject to historical conditions in their expression; proscription can only be led by context.[465] While we have argued that the problem of harm in IS pushes us toward a strategy of actualising critical value in order that we might ameliorate of harmful states of affairs, the relationship between critical value and 'the facts of the matter' is not an easy one, taking place in a broader context subject to power relations. Bhaskar notes this difficulty in adjudicating between the truth of statements and their referents beyond what is invoked in practical activity:

> A proposition is true if and only if the state of affairs that it expresses (describes) is real. But propositions cannot be compared with states of affairs; their relationship cannot be described as one of

[464] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 77.
[465] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 149.

> correspondence… There is no way in which we can look at the world and then at a sentence and ask whether they fit. There is just the expression of the world in speech (or thought).[466]

This constitutes an ontological reformulation of what the Critical Theorists considered to be the historical limits of social science, which was essential to our understanding of the threefold problematic as engaging with the problem of harm from the perspective of knowledge production. Furthermore, it parallels Eliasian ideas of reality congruence while, as we have suggested, maintaining the importance of the subject/object relationship to sociological enquiry.[467] In broader philosophical terms, the problem concerns the way that 'truth' as a normative value is accepted, an assertion that has come increasingly under fire following post-structuralist approaches in the discipline due to its potentially violent and totalitarian implications.[468] Numerous authors, not least Adorno, have highlighted the violence inherent in any particular claim to truth due to the way that it may close down potential interventions. Nonetheless, that there are limitations on what it is possible to consider as harmful in the context of an asymmetrical power relationship does not exhaust the importance of scientific knowledge in its eventual overcoming, as Adorno recognised.[469] In discussing the relationship of knowledge to the problem of violence through reification, as a key aspect of the problem of harm, we are more often than not describing the relationship of truth to power, rather than the qualities associated with truth as such. In this regard, the metatheoretical account of the Critical Realists constitutes an important intervention, but one that requires further qualification if is to answer the problems Critical Theory raises in the context of the problem of harm.

This relationship remains as a tension in the account we have provided due to the way in which our reformulation of the sociology of harm conventions requires, to some degree, a pattern of abstraction and reification if it is to function; it remains the case that the result of this form of production results in concepts of harm that remain subject to the critiques

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[466] Bhaskar, *Realist Theory of Science*, p.249.

[467] This incorporates the insights of Elias, 'Problems of Involvement and Detachment'. However, the subject/object distinction remains as a theory of how the social scientist relates to their object while not relying on the relative involvement/detachment of the investigator.

[468] Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism & International Relations: Bringing the Political Back in* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 15.

[469] 'For the mind (*Geist)* is indeed not capable of producing or grasping the totality of the real, but it may be possible to penetrate the detail, to explode in miniature the mass of merely existing reality.' Benjamin Snow, 'Introduction to Adorno's "The Actuality of Philosophy"', *Telos* 1977, no. 31 (20 March 1977).

levelled by Critical Theory on the grounds of reification and non-identity. However, it is important to note that Critical theory at no point denies the positive value that arises from conceptually guided activity, considering it to be the point *both* of the perpetuation of harm and of our potential amelioration of its various forms. Furthermore, we will see that the model put forward here is sensitive to the democratisation of scientific knowledge production that Linklater implies should be a goal of our strategy for addressing the problem of harm, but once again in a way that maintains the subject/object axis that is so important to our understanding of the role of social structure.

The tension between the production of knowledge as simultaneously tending toward a democratisation of the problem of harm and toward complicity in harmful practices is one that will be decisive for the arguments that follow. In the final chapter, we will see the way in which the intersection of Critical Realism and Critical Theory pushes us toward understanding the relationship between critical value and object adequacy both in the object of investigation – the problem of harm – and reflexively in their own practices of social scientific enquiry. In this context, the next chapter will consider the problem of reflexivity as the final aspect of the threefold problematic and evaluate the implications that placing Critical Theory at the core of how we relate to the problem of harm has for the production of knowledge in International Studies.

Chapter 5 – The Demands of Harm on Worldly Theorising

Introduction

The last chapter sought to reconstruct the sociology of harm conventions based on an ontology that was able to maintain link between critical value and object adequacy, a step that was necessary if we are to understand the problem of harm as a practical issue for International Studies in light of the concerns that Critical Theory raises. In this regard, it operates as an approach that can account for the kind of empirical investigation that Linklater wishes to undertake while maintaining the value of insights from Critical Theory concerning the normative implications of social scientific work. This chapter will complete the reconstruction undertaken there by considering it in light of the problem of reflexivity. It does this by considering how the ontology of CR can be understood as providing a compliment to the negative epistemology of Adorno and the opportunities and problems that this provokes. The aim is to put forward an approach that can circumscribe the problem of harm in historical context while maintaining a reflexive attitude toward the contribution that social science can make. In order to do this, we will find ourselves mediating between two factors: the problem of reification in the process of thought, and the objective historical *demand* toward the conceptualisation of suffering that the problem of harm provokes in IS.

The key arguments that have led to this point first arose from our analysis of the role of Critical Theory and the problem of harm within the discipline of International Studies. In conducting a reading of the discipline's development that focussed on its engagement with the problem of harm, we argued two things; firstly, the discipline holds an ethical stance that raises the problem of harm as a core concern of the discipline and, secondly, that Critical Theory reformulates this concern into problems for the production of knowledge. These problems – the threefold problematic – consisted of a concern with object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity, and serves to highlight the close relationship between scientific enquiry and ethical value that has characterised the discipline's engagement with the problem of harm.

This led us to focus on the implications that Critical Theory had for the problem more broadly, particularly in the work of the Frankfurt School. The close relationship between the threefold problematic and the problem of harm lay in the distinction between suffering and the recognition of such that is registered in the concept of harm; Critical Theory therefore understands harm to be the *social appropriation* of suffering. This conceptual distinction is one of the key implications of Critical Theory for the way that we understand the problem of harm in IS, not just as a core focus of the discipline, but as a core component of the way that it produces knowledge.

We then proceeded to investigate the possibility that empirical studies of the problem of harm might be conducted on the basis of these insights. Chapter 3 argued that Linklater's sociology of harm conventions, while having a great deal to contribute to our empirical understanding of the problem of harm, was conceptualised in a way that did not account for the normative aspects of social scientific enquiry and therefore does not account for all of the problems provoked by our investigation of harm in social life. In Chapter 4, we formulated a reconstruction of Linklater's sociology that introduced Critical Realism as a way of incorporating both recognised and unrecognised causes in society and which did not reduce society to our knowledge of it. Moreover, in doing so, we linked object adequacy and critical value by highlighting the way that the critical content of explanations is dependent on their position relative to the object of society and the harm conventions that it is reliant upon.

However, despite being predicated upon an orientation to the world, the theories produced by the Critical Realist approach to investigation rely on the abstract concepts that Adorno was so cautious of. A key problem highlighted by CT – that knowledge tends toward a domination of its object – remains a key issue with for our account, and is addressed in this chapter through the problem of reflexivity as the third and final aspect of the threefold problematic. In particular, we will address the power relations that International Studies both studies and is subject to, as well as the more general concerns provoked by instrumental reason that were raised by the Frankfurt School. The challenge is that despite our beginning with good intentions in focussing on the problem of harm, social investigation is tied to – and constituted by – particular forms of what Adorno would call 'identity thinking' and which demand a sociological account of its origins and development. Our aim is therefore to understand whether the approach laid out here can be developed in a critical and reflexive manner or whether such an attempt is doomed to commit itself to a project based on biased judgement and unexamined ideological commitments.

The argument of this chapter will focus on the way that both the normative critique deployed by Critical Theory and the reconstructed sociology put forward in the last chapter have circumscribed the problem of harm, and how it relates to the experience of suffering. In examining how this is the case for each approach, we will see how they chasten each other due to the interdependency of their modes of engagement.[470] In this regard, the positive claims of sociology and the practices of negation that we saw in Critical Theory can be understood as aspects of a broader vocational approach to social science which is not comprehensively determined by the positing of any particular value but nonetheless maintains a strong link to the ethical demands that the problem of harm provokes.

While this formulation does not put forward any particular proscription for ideal forms of political community, it does lead us to consider the political qualities that arise from the process of science when it is understood as working in the space between structured reality and concept-formation. The characteristic object-orientation of realist theories serves to push beyond subject-centred understandings of historical interpretation by engaging in a practice of world disclosure, interrogating a world that is both ontologically pre-given and meaningful in particular ways. In this case, the labour of scientific investigation expands on the possibilities that inhere in the objects it studies, engaging the world critically *through* concepts rather than attempting to bypass this problem through some deeper idealisation.[471] In line with Adorno's argument, our attempts at understanding are situated in a historical fashion that forces us to rely on an understanding of history that places the development of knowledge in a position with regard to broader power relations. However, our reformulation allows us to develop the kind of sociological project that Elias would argue for while still maintaining the normative commitments that Adorno put front and centre.

The chapter concludes with some reflections on the contribution that our investigation has for International Studies. Broadly speaking, this centres on the extent to which the kind of object-orientation argued for here provides a common ground for discussion between different theoretical points of view, as Linklater has suggested might be the result of a focus on the problem of harm.[472] In particular, it argues strongly against the identity-foundations that characterise the current state of disciplinary pluralism, instead putting forward a

[470] The term 'chastened' is adopted from Levine. See Daniel Levine, *Recovering International Relations: The Promise of Sustainable Critique* (New York: OUP USA, 2012), 33.
[471] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, xx.
[472] Andrew Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations*, 1st Edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 154.

commitment to the ethical possibilities that unify social scientific investigation and which are a hallmark of the realist approach. While this seems to run counter to the concerns of Critical Theory due to the way it identifies possible grounds for ethical action, this is not the case. Rather, we argue that this commitment functions as a constant reminder of the ethical problems that are raised whenever one engages in social scientific activity, and persists as an impossible demand that underpins the ceaseless shifting of position that characterises the reflexive development of knowledge. In terms that would be recognised both by Critical Theory and Critical Realism, it is the distinction between essence and appearance that renders social science necessary in the first place, and this demand is not one to be assumed away or shied away from as a social task.

The Idea of a Historical Sociology with Objective Foundations

As we saw in the third chapter, a key insight of the Eliasian approach to sociology lies in its acknowledgement of the thoroughly historical object of social enquiry; Linklater brings this insight to bear in his historical, rather than philosophical, approach to the problem of harm. Elias argued against the 'retreat to the present' that characterised orthodox sociology due to its reifying features, in particular focussing on the complexity of the processes that led up to contemporary social figurations. While abandoning a teleological approach to historical change, he nonetheless maintained that ignoring development altogether would constitute throwing the baby out with the bathwater of sociological explanation.[473] Indeed in doing so, conventional approaches to sociology remained once again committed to the 'thinking adult' as the fundamental constituent of social reality, a fallacy that Elias' broader ontology replaced with a focus on the chain of generations of which all of us are a part. The aim of this chapter is to reflect upon how we might incorporate this reflexive approach into our realist reconstruction of the sociology of harm conventions. Our argument is that in understanding the work, and not just the object, of social science as historical has a significant impact on the way that it should attempt to engage in social scientific investigation.

While the Eliasian approach tends toward the examination of the past as an object of study with equal importance to that of the present, the problem of reflexivity forces us to consider the role of International Studies as it engages with the problem of harm as an object of study to be simultaneously that of contributing to the problem of harm as a form of social

[473] Ibid., 160.

negotiation. The dynamic that allows the formulation of scientific knowledge to be related to knowledge of normative value was considered in the last chapter. However, it remains for us to outline how such a form of study might relate itself to the world such that it is able to acknowledge the possibility that it may be implicated in the promotion of harmful practices. The question that must be asked in this context is if the sociology of harm conventions, as other social sciences, is engaged in the process of *producing* explanations and concepts of harm, then how might it conduct this engagement in light of its potentially harmful effects? Answering this question as an exercise in reflecting on the ethical problems that arise from social involvement in the problem of harm can help us to lay out a position with the third aspect of the threefold problematic, that of reflexivity, that is broadly compatible with the implications of Critical Theory.

The stratified understanding of causal powers put forward in the last chapter led us to argue that social scientific explanations operate through a process of analytical differentiation that ultimately undermine linear understandings of how causal powers work in social life. In particular, it overcomes teleological understandings of the causal powers of social structure, arguing instead that they instead have tendencies that may or may not bear out. This allows us to understand the variety of ways in which social life is structured to have varied and potentially antagonistic relationships with each other; a situation which can only pertain if we are willing to acknowledge their relative autonomy. The importance for this understanding for the sociology of harm conventions lies with the way in which causal powers are not merely the imaginings of a more-or-less objective observer, but rather reveal something about real and causally efficacious objects of knowledge such as social structure. While we rely on a process of abstraction in recognising social structures and their impact on the lives of subjects, International Studies can, in important respects, contribute to the development of harm conventions by making these more abstract forms of harm intelligible.

However, if knowledge is transitive with regard to its (relatively) intransitive object, then our concepts of harm are transitive with regard to the object they seek to account for, that of suffering. This formulation allows us to account for the variability we find in harm conventions throughout history while maintaining the central normative object of suffering that Linklater suggests.[474] The critical role of the sociology of harm conventions comes to light once we realise that the meaning of the past or the future is not fixed, but nonetheless

[474] Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent"', 181.

can become causally efficacious once it becomes an object of knowledge for reflexive subjects; the sociology of harm conventions thus brings to bear new and refined understandings of harm upon the reflexive process that Linklater calls the problem of harm. As such, the sociologist of harm conventions is a historical actor that finds themselves in a particular position with regard to received meanings and concepts of harm, and engages with these in order to better ground the ethical decision making in which subjects take part. The Critical Realist framework conceptualises this exercise as a political one that involves claims concerning the objective basis of social being, and in doing so attempts to counteract the dominance of received meanings that lack object adequacy.

A clear consequence of this approach is that we must understand the concepts that the sociology of harm conventions works with as related to forms of suffering, but which it may not fully account for. Rather than the incorporation of numerous correlative factors into processes that 'add up' to a given process, the development of these accounts should be critical of the internal relationships that pertain between causal factors. This is inclusive of the process of investigation itself, which must be open to criticism based on its historical position and conditions of possibility. In this regard, Critical Realists have gone to great lengths to document the various ways in which social scientists abstract from social phenomena in order to identify the points at which thought becomes entangled with its object.[475] While the Eliasian language of relative involvement and detachment makes a contribution to demonstrating the varied stances that social scientists take toward the world, this once again fails to place ontological weight on such problems, placing the onus on the misplaced political judgement of the sociologist. As we saw in the previous chapter, both approaches converge on the extent to which an awareness of *what is being talked about* – i.e. the implicit or explicit ontology of an approach – is of importance to a politically engaged social science. Ultimately, the sociology of harm conventions cannot be separated from more philosophical questions concerning the kind of accounts it produces; it is not possible to engage in questions of how new forms and ideas of harm develop without an engagement with what harm is or might be.

This necessity highlights the sociologist of harm conventions – indeed, any subject who engages with the problem of harm – as being involved in an active process of negotiation and contestation. They are, in a sense, between philosophy and social science;

[475] Andrew Sayer, *Method in Social Science: Revised 2nd Edition*, 2nd Edition. (Routledge, 2010), 85.

both engaging with the problem of harm at an empirical level and engaging with normative questions that concern ontology, reflexivity and judgement. This is in line with Linklater's formulation of the problem of harm as constituting a sociological, and not merely idealist-philosophical, object of study, but also incorporates the importance of philosophical and normative reflection. The processes that are described by the sociology of harm conventions are, therefore, the congruence of structure and perceived events when conceived under the aspect of a meaningful story which is always, in some sense, pre-determined by the location and finitude of the social scientist.[476] The result of this is to place the social scientist in a relationship to the broader social world, articulating their explanations in the context of a class, gender or racial background that is immediately subject to causally efficacious relations of power.[477]

In Critical Realist terms, the way we articulate change and process when we are engaged in the study of the social world lead directly back to the triptych of ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgemental rationality.[478] The validity of social scientific statements depends on the extent to which it is able to explain the causal powers and emergent properties of the referent object. Such an approach depends on the ability of social scientists to address the stratified nature of social reality, a pattern of explanation which is required if we are to begin to account for structural and structured forms of harm. While the repeated empirical occurrence of one form of harm can be understood as the starting point for the sociology of harm conventions, periods of latency, change and continuity can only be understood through the analytical separation of the various strata of social life and their relationship to each other. In doing so, therefore, the sociologist is engaged in the production of ideas of harm in collaboration with others, demonstrating that the site of this labour – history – is constitutive for our account in a way that is described by Archer's morphogenetic sequence above.[479]

The focus on processes in Eliasian sociology is useful to the extent that it provides a vantage point on the development of concepts of harm that is attentive to the long, varied and branching history of the concept, but only in the context of a more nuanced analysis that is able to examine processes of interaction across varying – and often contradictory – relations

[476] See Mervyn Hartwig, 'Introduction to Roy Bhaskar, Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation', in *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (Routledge, 2009).
[477] Tony Lawson, 'Feminism, Realism, and Universalism', *Feminist Economics* 5, no. 2 (1 January 1999): 40.
[478] Summarised in Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 144.
[479] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 158.

between layers of stratification and temporal scales. In the context of this thesis, we argued that this principle is already at play in Critical Realism, and that the objective basis of historical enquiry should lie at the core of our efforts to engage with the world. Rather than privileging one vantage point, our engagement with the problem of harm should attempt to bring together different forms of investigation according to their relationship to the social world, as Linklater attempts.[480] The reconstruction undertaken here goes some way to underlabouring for such links between subdisciplines and fields such that their contribution can be understood by placing their respective object domains relative to each other.

The Principles of a Reconstructed Sociology of Harm Conventions

The arguments put forward throughout this thesis can now be put together in programmatic fashion as a way of demonstrating what a reconstructed sociology of harm conventions might look like. These principles follow the reconstruction put forward in the previous chapter. Justificatory and performative principles, centred on the problem of reflexivity and the practical applicability of the sociology of harm conventions to International Studies will be put forward in the remainder of this chapter. In large part, it is not intended for these ideas to oppose those of Linklater but rather to be understood as a process of underlabouring through which the contribution of the sociology of harm conventions can be better understood and situated. The principles of our reconstruction are as follows:

- *The socialisation of changing concepts of harm through the distinction between experience and conceptualisation*: The most immediate contribution of the sociology of harm conventions concerns the way in which ideas of harm have changed deeply and regularly throughout the historical development of society. The aim of the sociology of harm conventions is therefore to understand the way in which this relationship changes in the context of differentiated and stratified historical experiences. The sociology of harm conventions thus begins from the experience of harm and investigates its objective basis in order to render them intelligible to discourse and conceptual articulation such that they might contribute to the negotiating of the problem of harm.

[480] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 154.

- *The causal dimension of changing ideas of harm through the distinction between objective history and conceptualisation*: The way in which experience feeds into ideas of harm is an investigation that can only be conducted substantively in a causal fashion that is conscious of multiple points of influence and determination. In line with Critical Realism, the focus is placed on the patterns of stratification and emergence experienced by suffering subjects. Against empiricism, these causal powers can be understood as the result of mechanisms, that remain real even when unactualised. Rather than a pragmatic convenience, the language of cause in the sociology of harm conventions is employed as a way of orienting sociological knowledge toward the world such that it can contribute to the object-adequacy of subjective understandings of how harm operates. In doing so, it demonstrates the relationship between transitive conceptual thought, practical knowledge, and the material reality of suffering subjects.
- *The complex mediation of the general and the particular*: The position-practice system adopted in chapter 4 addressed the way in which talk of 'structure' and 'agency' were only ever analytical divisions when referring to some particular case. The fully autonomous agent is non-existent due to their embeddedness in history, just as the social structure does not fully determine the actions or ideas of particular agents. However, the ability to address forms of abstract or structural harm requires a form of objectivation if they are to be understood as more general problems that are agnostic toward the particular subject occupying a social role. These accounts, we have argued, require an emergentist account of social structure that is sensitive to the persistence of social structure over time.
- *The conceptualisation of internal and contingent relations*: Approaching the way in which forms of harm come to be as the result of a nexus of causes, the relation between these causal factors necessarily holds to a set of permissive conditions without which the object of investigation could not occur. Separating these internal relations from those which are efficacious but contingent serves to locate the position of a given social structure in relation to others, allowing a far richer understanding of the role of structures in harm.
- *The ontological dimension of social change*: Social change is not mere fiction or construction, but consists of a real change in the causal complexes that are generative of emergent social structures. While we might address the problem of harm at many different layers of social stratification, i.e. at the level of discourse or of habit, the

explanation of these changes needs to engage in a form of stratified explanation that accounts for power relations, countervailing forces and structural underdetermination. Rather than a purely empirical and subjective assessment, then, social change has an objective or ontological dimension that serves as the site of shared engagement between subjects.

- *A negative concept of totality*: Against the idea that there is a common teleological thread that runs throughout history, the negative concept of totality is a normative idea that reminds us that the experience of suffering always escapes our concepts of harm. In producing knowledge concerning harm, then, we are forced to acknowledge its transitive nature with regard to suffering. As a further elaboration on several of the principles above, the concept of totality operates as a way of highlighting the necessary *ceteris paribus* clauses that are implied in every, inevitably partial, causal account. While social thought tends toward totality, it is necessary to remind oneself constantly that the fullness of an account is always precluded by the objectivity of the world that it cannot hope to match. In grasping toward the whole, our concepts of harm must be qualified as precarious and open to criticism on the basis of other well founded social explanations.

This approach to the sociology of harm conventions would seek to explain the causal basis of forms of social determination, rendering them intelligible to those engaged in negotiating the problem of harm. As we noted in the last chapter, this strategy can be understood as critical both of prior theories and institutions through which they are recreated. This bridges the problems of object adequacy and critical value in the sociology of harm conventions. It does so, firstly, but providing an explicit basis for critique by making the passage from facts to values viable. Secondly, it locates the social scientist historically, and acknowledges the political role that even the most detached judgements play. This objective basis, from which theory proceeds, requires us to consider the problem of reflexivity in the practice of social science lest it become part of the very processes that it seeks to critique.

Reflexive Theorising in the Sociology of Harm Conventions

In developing an account of the relationship that the sociology of harm conventions has to its real object of study, we also reconceptualise the way in which reflexivity can be considered as part of social scientific activity. In short, the assumption of the real historical

position of social scientific account permits their regulation through an intensive engagement with previously established forms of knowledge. At least in part, the impulse toward this reflexive process follows on from the transitivity of our accounts of the problem of harm; it is not simply the case that we can, on the basis of any particular scientific account, proceed to forms or practice aimed at its mitigation. While the sociology of harm conventions might provide the basis for political action and points of possible change, it does so in a way that contributes to, rather than solves, the problem of harm.

However, this open manner of political engagement does not necessarily follow from the kind of philosophical realism adopted here in a straightforward manner. In particular, locating the basis of our accounts of the problem of harm as a function of the subject/object relationship constitutes a scientific attitude that is susceptible to many of the critiques formulated in the work of the Frankfurt School. In this vein, Fluck argues that the Critical Realist concern with 'getting it right' demonstrates precisely the instrumentalist scientific attitude that Critical Theory was so concerned with countering.[481] There are two points of response here. Firstly, as a means of clarifying the relationship between the production of knowledge and the world, Critical Realism serves to critique already existing epistemic practices that may have violent or detrimental political effects. It therefore holds out some normative benefits for the sociology of harm conventions. Secondly, this can be further qualified through the necessity of working *through* rather than *against* concepts of harm, as was acknowledged in a broad sense by Adorno.[482] The kind of positive critique put forward by Critical Realism remains useful and relevant for our approach to the problem of harm. However, with regard to how we construct theory, it is important to consider how the necessary reifications that play a part in accounts of social structure, indeed any layer of social stratification, can be addressed and mitigated.

The aim is to outline the mediation of harm *as a concept* and the historical and social *experience* of suffering in the practice of social science. In examining the concept of harm in society, we encounter the expression of suffering through a socially-embedded concept that expresses experience in a way that is more-or-less communicable. This expression, a claim concerning what is harmful, can be understood as an effort both to communicate this to others

[481] Fluck, 'The Hardest Service: Conceptions of Truth in Critical International Thought', 213.
[482] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 12.

intersubjectively and to appropriate and conceptualise its objective basis, that of suffering.[483] The intersubjective dimension feeds into political practice such as dialogue and consensus building which Linklater located as a key site of normative engagement with the problem of harm.[484] The second concerns the attempt to grasp the reality of experience through concepts, and which concerns the ability of subjects and scientific activity to engage in an investigation of the subject/object relationship. Understanding the latter in particular has been the goal of this thesis, particularly given the necessity of accounting for social structure in abstract and seemingly distant forms of harm.

This approach begins from the problem of harm as a demand that social science must respond to; a demand that we saw as a key object of concern in several areas of International Studies, and which was formulated as a problem for knowledge production by Critical Theory. Inasmuch as the tension centred on the problem of harm arises from the uncertainties that accompany changing patterns of global interconnection, it can be understood as resting upon the way in which our concepts of harm are challenged by the developing emergent properties of complex social systems.[485] As the tendency of modern social differentiation is toward forms of alienation which isolate subjects from their objective basis, Kompridis argues that critique should be understood as a practice of world disclosure, serving to disclose possibility in the context of social life.[486] The realist understanding of social science put forward here fulfils this role by highlighting the ontological basis of the received meanings that fill out our lives and inform our understandings of what harm is and can be. In acknowledging the essential attachments of scientific activity to broader social life, it becomes possible to relate our explanations to broader debates concerning the problem of harm and attempting to account for their broader social consequences.

The critical value of the sociology of harm conventions arises from two points. Firstly, it highlights the historical basis of the understandings of harm that characterise contemporary society. In doing so, the practice of explanatory critique serves to denaturalise

[483] For a commentary, see Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 145–50. In this regard, Patomäki's argument that the ontological dimension can be understood as a regulative metaphor articulates the way that the ontological claim is taken as real for the sake of scientific statements, i.e. constitutes a metaphor in the form of an existential hypothesis upon which the regulation of possible claims rests.
[484] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 100.
[485] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 1–22.
[486] 'What is involved is an irreducibly *practical* ability, an ability to make transitions, to open passageways not already open.' Nikolas Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory Between Past and Future*, Reprint Edition (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2011), 239.

the way in which the reification of concepts presents them as timeless.[487] Secondly, in putting forward this sociological argument, it also identifies the points at which the internal and contingent relations that characterise a form of harm can highlight objective possibilities for its amelioration that are presented by its real causal basis. The relationship between these two aspects can be understood as *circumscribing* the problem posed by the production of conceptual knowledge in the context of the problem of harm and the problems that Critical Theory highlights; it is both the case that we are conscious of the failings of our definitions and that we are pushed toward making the jump to practical involvement as an ethical impulse. The negative moment seeks to decentre knowledge through an insistent argument from the impossibility of its adequacy, while the positive moment is pushed toward definition and conceptualisation due to the ethical call that harm presents to us.

We can understand the space between these two imperatives as a *praxeological gap* that cannot be reconciled in theory. However, the reverse is not the case due to the way in which history continues 'behind the back' of theoretical scrutiny as a form of transitive knowledge. This was clear in the first chapter where we saw theories being updated and challenged based on historical change. The objective aspect of history continues in a way that is relatively autonomous from the epistemic activity of the social scientist just as it does the conceptually-guided of activity carried out by subjects as they create and re-create the problem of harm. This can be understood through Adorno's claim as to the 'weight' of objectivity and its foundational position in his materialism; it was possible to consider an object that was not a subject, but not a subject that was not also an object.[488] Our attempts to account for the problem of harm in social science cannot, therefore, escape historical processes, and remain tied to (and influenced by) their objective basis in the position and preconceptions of social scientists. Attempts at negation of old understandings of harm and definition of new ones also serve to follow this pattern in a way that has ethical consequences. Negation may be irresponsible by virtue of its hesitancy to engage in the amelioration of harmful practices, while definition may serve to omit unrecognised suffering voices. Attempting to account for forms of harm in social science means that we stand in an existential position with regard to the objectivity of suffering; the process of objectivation, through which we understand the objects of our enquiry as independent of us, can be

[487] This is in line with Linklater's argument that the critique of the immutability thesis can be seen as one of the key achievements of Critical Theory. See Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory', 48.
[488] Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, 249.

understood as necessary due to our evaluative judgements despite restricting our understanding of the 'fullness' of suffering that it refers to.

A key argument of this chapter is that the problem of reflexive theory construction is articulated, in different directions, in both Critical Theory and Critical Realism. The aim, however, is not to compromise between the two, but rather to mediate between them in order to understand the productivity of standing at a point between the two extremes. This is possible due to the way in which their core arguments are not articulated against each other, but rather with regard to their relationship to the object of society. Indeed, one of the points that seems in little doubt when they are considered side-by-side is that both assert the primacy of the object in the process of thought; either through Adorno's preponderance of the object, as above, or Bhaskar's insistence on the irreducibility of ontology.[489] In order to put forward the tension that pertains between these two, we can now consider each of them in terms of each other.

Adorno's Critical theory as Doubly Realist

In Chapter 2, we argued that the emphatic *a priori* that lay at the root of Adorno's writing was that of the concrete historical experience of suffering in social life, and which operated as the normative basis for the social scientific enterprise. Inasmuch as the sociology of harm conventions is guided by some field of definition, it is located in the way that suffering is articulated through the concept of harm and the ways in which this space it negotiated historically. Key to this relationship is the way in which suffering is experienced as a mediation of forms of reason and their 'other' in the work of the Frankfurt School.[490] That this category exists, however, does not immediately imply that suffering is entirely amenable to subjective reflection; rather, it demonstrates the way it resists a full understanding of particularity and an appreciation of the way that the objective experience of suffering goes beyond immediate appearance.

In line with the idea that there is 'much to commend Adorno as a Realist', the claim made here is that the concern with suffering that his work presents can be understood as a parallel claim to the Critical Realist metatheory concerning the reality of a causally

[489] Roy Bhaskar, 'Rorty, Realism and the Idea of Freedom', in *Reading Rorty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 204–5.
[490] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 18.

efficacious real world.[491] In this context, the assumption of suffering puts forward a negative ontology, a way of circumscribing the world that lies outside of the identity thinking utilised by science. For the Critical Theorists and, we will argue, a historically grounded Critical Realist approach, this strategy operates as more than just a principle for theory construction. Rather it should be understood as a way of acknowledging the historical limitations of theory in a way that simultaneously locates its practical orientation toward the problem of harm. Despite their attempts to push beyond subject centred reason, Adorno in particular would not permit himself the arrogance of presuming to have achieved this goal.[492] The role of the world beyond thought, for Adorno, finds itself expressed historically as 'the other of reason', which evaded conceptualisation in its totality even in those instances where it was struck upon in detail.

In understanding the basis of social life as having objective qualities that evade thought, Adorno already aligns himself with a view that Bhaskar puts forward in his understanding of the relationship between the transitive and intransitive dimensions.[493] However, while Critical Realists focus on the practice of science and social science, Adorno's broader concern with forms of life under conditions of alienation underpin a more comprehensive approach to materialist thought. Ultimately, however, this relationship is one of commonality that is obscured by their different approaches to epistemic activity. Sayer and others, in deploying the Critical Realist framework in a historical and sociological setting, demonstrate the way in which meanings are 'called upon' unknowingly by actors whether they are engaged with critically or not; such arguments have a long heritage in the theories' shared Marxist heritage and their concern with the formulation of appearances in social life.[494] Adorno's concern with the historical function of conceptual thought is grounded by the way that thought seeks to grasp the threats that confront it from the unknown. He consistently uses this insight to demonstrate the fallibility of positive concepts of history,

[491] Patomäki also understands the 'the critical theory of the Frankfurt School' as an attempt to transcend structuralism and individualism under the category of scientific realism. Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 99. The claim that there is 'much to commend Adorno as a Realist' comes from Alan Norrie, *Law & the Beautiful Soul* (Grasshopper Press, 2013), 166.

[492] 'Although dialectics allows us to think the absolute, the absolute as transmitted by dialectics remains in bondage to conditioned thinking.' Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 405.

[493] The argument here is parallel to Bhaskar's 'existential intransitivity'. Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 47.

[494] Sayer's *Moral Significance of Class* deals extensively with the concept of lay normativity as a foundational element of social life. See Andrew Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5–12.

instead putting forward a formulation that acknowledges its own omissions. The apotheosis of the Frankfurt School, in offering what we might understand as an architecture of the concept, lies with an argument for a distinction between the world and what we know of it in social science. By way of comparison:

> "the analysis of experiment has not been useless of the human sciences, since it shows something very general about the real world, namely that it is structured and stratified, that the concrete really is a union of many determinations, and hence that abstraction and analysis are appropriate methods of developing knowledge of concrete beings. But it also shows that where experiment is not possible, this analysis and abstraction is not measurable, and is testable only by its capacity to explain the minute particulars of concrete entities."[495]

Here we find that the Critical Realist approach argued for by Collier discusses the analysis of nature – thought often in more colloquial terms – in terms of irreducible particulars through a strategy of negative framing that would not be unfamiliar to the Frankfurt School. The concept of nature is, therefore, enough to put the work of Adorno in the same materialist camp as the Critical Realists. However, this is largely put forward from the point of view of subjective epistemic activity in his work while, deliberately, being little fleshed out in a substantive fashion. To the extent that Adorno did engage in positive conceptual examinations, the articulation of positive evaluation was put forward in tentative terms which focussed on the possibility of 'accidental' truth produced by a relationship between subject and object that was in no way guaranteed.[496] While the extent to which this occurred was heavily dependent on historical circumstance as an existential situation which was not amenable to subjective reason, the fact that such a possibility remained means that realism in some sense remains essential to the viability of critical thought due to its approach to the possibility of social change as objective.[497]

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[495] Andrew Collier, *In Defence of Objectivity* (Routledge, 2013), 43.

[496] '[…] metaphysics cannot be a deductive context of judgements about things in being, and neither can it be conceived after the model of an absolute otherness terribly defying thought. It would be possible only as a legible constellation of things in being […] To that end, metaphysics must know how to wish.' Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 407.

[497] In this regard, Adorno's negative dialectic can be understood as speaking in an ontological register, but in the consciousness that it is an ontology of 'the wrong state of things.' Ibid., 11.

The pervasiveness of this dynamic can be seen running to the core of Adorno's approach to suffering and the role that it plays in his argument. In adopting suffering as the functional *a priori* of Critical Theory, an approach inspired by Adorno would acknowledge the inevitability of reification and seek to sublimate it in a direction that is deemed to be ethically justified. This orientation, however, is definitively not the same thing as positing a particular model of suffering in the form of a clearly defined humanism or other moral programme. The persistent reflections on Auschwitz, the use of the atomic bomb and the intensification of capitalist production in the Frankfurt School are more than just hermeneutic or aesthetic reflections. Rather, they can be understood as outlining a particular practical orientation toward history that justifies its normative basis through persistently reflecting on the problem of harm while rejecting the idealist moment of synthesis that the work of Marx, as much as Hegel, would culminate in. However, what is it that justifies this preoccupation with suffering? Adorno and Horkheimer would consider such a focus as self-evident due to the way in which the horrifying experience of 20th Century history substitutes for any positive argumentation.[498] This bears parallels to some Critical Realist analyses of Marx, in which ethical justification comes from the way in which the subject holds an objective interest in the overcoming of forms of oppression and domination.[499] With the Frankfurt School, this is conveyed in an aesthetic and essayistic manner, in effect 'without words', a strategy which refuses to substitute concepts for the existential horror of real experience.[500]

In this regard, we can consider the work of Adorno to be doubly realist – both within his approach to the objects of scientific enquiry and in his approach to the problems raised by suffering as an existential demand. In particular, the tendency toward designating the pathological elements of society has having methodological primacy can be seen as one way to 'make the most' of a capitalist society that has demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability despite the suffering it is implicated in causing. Honneth puts forward this idea in his evaluation of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The intense focus on the irrationalities of modern society can be understood as a way of exaggerating through abstraction; but it is a form of exaggeration that is commensurate with the existential problem that suffering raises

[498] Stirk, *Max Horkheimer*, 190. See also Adorno's claim that 'lending a voice to suffering is the condition of all truth.' Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 17–18.
[499] Collier, *Critical Realism*, 189.
[500] 'Auschwitz confirmed the philosopheme of pure identity as death.' Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 362.

in the minds of those who have experienced it.[501] Adopting suffering as an *a priori* normative principle may, therefore, be the only way in which internally coherent and totalising forms of rationality can underpin large scale structural harms. In this context, a focus on the rigour and purported pessimism of the Frankfurt School overlooks the vital issue of concern for the suffering that was epitomised in the work of Adorno. As with Critical Realism, the results on conceptual thought under this understanding should be judged against the world as objective totality; the hope and meaning that we attach to the practice of critique is a practical issue, not implied by the practice of theory as such. The key contribution of Critical Theory in this sense is to argue that this judging of social science against the world has a normative component that we can see when we highlight the significance of the problem of harm for International Studies.

In Chapter 2, we argued that the appropriation of suffering in the work of Horkheimer and Adorno remains plausible to the extent that it is framed against suffering, but not against any particular form of suffering. This ensures that the conceptual appropriation of experience that is core to the problem of harm remains minimal while its quality, as an ethical promise grounded in experience, is circumscribed through categories that are apparent in the social scientific production of concepts and definitions. We can, in figurative terms, begin to understand the shape of that which is not known through the shape of our failure to know it – a strategy that is grasped through transcendental modes of questioning directed at forms of social practice and their implication in the problem of harm. Adorno's non-scientistic realism, then, is clearly found in his emphasis on reconciliation with the object, and operates not merely as an epistemological strategy but as a practical strategy that can only be understood as holding to a normatively grounded but essentially realist ontology.[502]

Critical Realism as a Critical Theory

From the bleak point of view of the Frankfurt School, the approach put forward by Critical Realism seems to be yet another attempt at scientific certainty based on the identity of concept and object, a process still in keeping with the still-developing conquest of nature. However, Chapter 4 demonstrated the way in which the focus on specific objects tends

[501] Axel Honneth, 'The Possibility of a Disclosing Critique of Society: The Dialectic of Enlightenment in Light of Current Debates in Social Criticism', *Constellations* 7, no. 1 (1 March 2000): 124.
[502] For an analysis of Adorno's negative dialectic from the point of view of Critical Realism, see Norrie, *Law & the Beautiful Soul*, 157–77.

toward a far broader analysis of social interconnection due to Bhaskar's attempt to decentre the object and its internal relations.[503] Critical Realism, in a remarkably similar way to Critical Theory, demonstrates how the traditional scientific attitude is based on a mode of enquiry that is based primarily on principles of subjective evaluation and the reduction of objects to our knowledge of them. By examining the necessary assumptions taken by scientific investigation, it then attempts to enhance our understanding of the truth expressed by scientific claims in a way that, we have argued, is fruitful for the sociology of harm conventions because of its approach to the subject/object relationship. As an explanation of the kinds of practice that the sociology of harm conventions is involved in, it puts social scientific attempts to grasp the problem of harm in a position that recognises it as explaining both more than intersubjectivist epistemologies would allow, and less than the covering laws of positivism would presume to claim.

The critique of the epistemic fallacy, through which being was reduced to our knowledge of it, places social scientific knowledge in a historical context while not reducing the truth of statements to their position in recognisable ideological contexts. It therefore allows us to address the problem of harm in a way that is capable of recognising both the importance of its intersubjective negotiation and the priority of the experience of suffering.[504] While the foundational elements of Critical Realism do not lead immediately to the consideration of an intersubjective process of negotiation, they trace the way in which the relationship between subjects and their historical location places limitations on the ground our social scientific accounts are able to address themselves to. As was the case with Critical Theory, we argued that while the causal basis of social action does not preclude subjects' abilities to modify and re-enact social structures, it does serve to outline the objective grounding of this process. Archer's morphogenetic approach demonstrates the way in which critique is necessarily socially constituted through her elaboration upon Bhaskar's position practice system, which demonstrates the implication of social scientists in a broader social contexts as well as it does their objects of study. In this regard, the approach put forward here attempts to buttress Linklater's sociology of harm conventions by fleshing out the subject/object relationship such that attempts at detachment can be better understood and

[503] Cited in Neil Curry, 'Critical Realism: Beyond the Marxism/Post-Marxism Divide', in *Critical Realism and Marxism*, Critical Realism: Interventions (Routledge, 2002), 126.
[504] The mediation of the two is made particularly evident by Patomäki, who considers Bhaskar's simple step to critique as insufficiently sensitive to the potential violence of truth claims. Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 155.

situated. In doing so, it provides a scientific grounding for the investigation of normative issues such as the problem of harm in a way that maintains the epistemic relativism that follows scientific attempts to grasp understand harm from the standpoint of 'damaged life'.[505]

The adoption of the principles of ontological realism and epistemic relativism aside, the final principle of judgemental rationalism argued for by Critical Realism is less easily laid out due to the manner in which it operates in the praxeological gap that was identified earlier in the chapter, and as such cannot be fully accounted for. In Kompridis' terms, it begs the question 'how can we ever reassure ourselves that we have got right, if only provisionally, the proportion of continuity and discontinuity in the forms of life we pass on?'[506] The process of judgement, when considered as the point at which action in the world is concretised and made manifest, once again remains at a point of tension between our limited understanding of harm and the strong ontology that we commit to in the process of scientific activity and abstraction. Indeed, it is only in the context of previous understandings of conceptual activity that we can impart meaning on social scientific engagement. Patomäki draws on Derrida's notion of undecidability to describe precisely this ethical point, through which the passing of judgement is described as a decision that is taken precisely at the point where the question of truth is also one of committing a deeply existential kind of violence.[507]

The point raised by the entanglement of social science within historical processes leads to several important insights regarding the responsibility adopted by those who attempt to engage with the problem of harm. In a form that prefigured the concerns raised by Critical Realism, Horkheimer would consider the manner in which our production of concepts was not subject to some divine court through which direct judgement on ethical issues could be passed. His single recourse lay with a community of the abandoned that must be both the subject and the object of emancipatory activity.[508] In a similar manner, Patomäki draws attention to the way in which the reliance of social scientific activity upon an intersubjective process of public negotiation implies the necessity of a non-violent and dialogic approach to scientific development.[509] In this context, the explanations produced by the sociology of harm conventions would be tested in a democratic context through which their historical meaning

[505] Butler considers the problems that come with embodiment in Adorno's work in her Adorno-Prize acceptance speech. See Judith Butler, 'Can One Lead a Good Life in a Bad Life'.
[506] Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure*, 13.
[507] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 155.
[508] Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, 82. See also Stirk, *Max Horkheimer*, 193.
[509] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 158.

is rendered apparent. Through such a process, it becomes possible to acknowledge the full implications of Linklater's Habermasian ethical standpoint in a context which is inclusive of scientific activity (but does not subsume it). That the democratic principle underlying scientific activity can be derived from the interest that inheres in other subjects ensures that the commitment to ontological realism can be justified within the intersubjective approach to ethical standards, just as it is rendered necessary when we pay attention to the failings of our accounts of the problem of harm along the lines of the subject/object distinction that Critical Realism focusses on.[510]

World Disclosure in the Practice of Critique

Both the philosophy put forward by Critical Theory and the sociology based on Critical Realism considered in this thesis have placed their key wager on engagement in the world while not reducing the properties of the world to the manner of this engagement, and as such can be seen as putting forward a commitment to a form of ontological realism. This wager can be understood not merely as an approach to how we make claims, but as a move that places theoretical activity within a historically situated sphere of ethical and political responsibility. The practice of theory in the world can be understood in this context as one that produces *existential judgements*; normative claims that are grounded on an ontology and which pertain to the historical basis of social phenomena.[511] These are always articulated in context, and can be seen as concrete instances of the kind of explanatory critique that we saw in Chapter 4 while still maintaining an openness to ethical disputation that the problem of harm requires. In the case of Critical Theory, such judgements are necessarily fallible because our attempts to conquer nature through concepts prove woefully inadequate to the objective weight of the suffering we are addressing. In the case of Critical Realism, provision

[510] For a recent debate on this topic, see the debate between Lawson and Harding. Lawson, 'Feminism, Realism, and Universalism'. Sandra Harding, 'The Case For Strategic Realism: A Response To Lawson', *Feminist Economics* 5, no. 3 (November 1999): 127–33.

[511] Horkheimer's maintains that the 'critical theory of society is, in its totality, the unfolding of a single existential judgement.' Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory; Selected Essays* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 227. From the point of view of Critical Realism and in a similar vein, Patomäki claims that the sciences are 'concerned with existential hypotheses and presumptions.' Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 100.

of superior explanations leads, *ipso facto*, to justification in removing the basis of false belief.[512]

While it is clear that Critical Theory and Critical Realism do not sit in an easy relationship to each other, both can be understood as engaging in a process of world disclosure through which they attempt to articulate objective possibilities for change in social life.[513] Under this formulation, the practice of critique would be involved in actively disclosing possibilities for new meanings of harm through an articulation of the relationship between received meanings and their objective basis. Critical Realism, in attempting to refine concepts through an examination of ontology, serves to highlight the way our claims are related to the world as such. To the extent that this operates in a way which relies on the perfectability (but not perfection) of our concepts, Critical Theory serves to remind us of the fallibility of this method – the objective results of our scientific enquiry never fully escape the problems and uncertainties that the threefold problematic represents. As such, taking the two approaches together serves to place our understanding of human activity as one element within a world that is fuller than can be entirely appreciated – a dialectical approach to practical involvement in the problem of harm that highlights, rather than attempts to move beyond, its ethical content.

By way of example, we can consider the way in which harm claims, as understood in our account of Linklater's sociology of harm conventions, are embedded in broader yet internal structural relationships that can be understood as having causal effects on the way in which particular instances of harmful practice occur. Our argument is that the practice of science, understood through Critical Realism, can serve to render intelligible these structural relationships in a way that is not merely discursive but holds some content that pertains to the way in which the world is structured. As such, *it discloses some understanding of the way the world works in a manner that was not previously acknowledged at a reflexive level*. As an explanatory critique, such accounts are more than discursive formations but can act as injunctions to practice that are predicated on the relationship they hold to previous relationships and the truth regimes of historically-located institutions.[514] While it is impossible to entirely move beyond the influence of structural backgrounds, it nonetheless is

[512] Collier, *Critical Realism*, 174.
[513] For an account that parallels what 'secondary involvement' might look like, see Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure*, 258–59.
[514] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 63.

able to render intelligible part of it in order to open it up to critical negotiation and appropriation.

Critical Theory, and particularly Adorno's *Negative Dialectic*, allows us to understand the historical nature of this process by relating subjective history to the broader object of natural history, which both determines it and escapes our conceptual frame. While the insistence on the subjective aspect of this problem may seem counter to the argument here, it remains essential due to the way in which the subject herself is a key aspect of the process of explaining historical objects; the social scientist engaged in explaining the problem of harm is not involved in passive documentation, but an active process of working through concepts and meanings. In positing a new concept of harm, we engage in the same appropriative logic through which the initial concept came to be ultimately inadequate to its object, and thus providing grounds for concern in the way that Adorno's normative orientation toward the priority of suffering seeks to provide. This mode of critique is therefore engaged in world disclosure through the way that it highlights the world in ourselves and, through the dialectical relationship between knowledge and its object, ourselves in the world, ultimately revealing a component of undecidability to the problem of harm which nonetheless does not erase its importance as a site of normative contention. This is not a metaphysically grounded programme so much as it is a formulation of the historical failure to address the problem of harm fully in the past; as such, it is an iterative process upon the kind of negotiation that we, in Chapter One, argued was characteristic of International Studies as a discipline.

By bringing to bear the suffering that evades our conceptual formulations, the practice of negative critique brings to bear arguments that are not always comfortable from the point of view of a relatively closed or functional epistemic totality or truth regime. In this regard, it sheds light on the problem of harm in a way that would not otherwise be the case in situations where asymmetric power relations serve to perpetuate particular forms of knowledge, as Linklater suggests.[515] While the methodological primacy of the pathological remains, situations in which the problem of harm seems relatively settled should not foreclose engagement with its possibilities; in a stratified and complex world, that forms of harm are not apparent does not mean that suffering does not occur. In this regard, a reading of the theories considered in Chapter One highlights that new understandings of harm arise as much from sensitivity to suffering as much as they do from rigorously defined conceptual

[515] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 229.

apparatuses. The fullest content of these theories, therefore, cannot be understood just as engaging with harm at a conceptual level, but rather *expressing* suffering in an ontological register that highlights it as shot through with ethical content.[516] Their value, then, is found as much in a historically-grounded articulation of objective (and perhaps accidental) truth in a way that cannot be reduced to their immediate active intervention into the sphere of dialogue and negotiation that the problem of harm constitutes.[517]

The various revisions of Critical Theory following the work of the first generation have been concerned with various viable reformulations of historically-situated meaning while not fully engaging with the world disclosing strategy utilised by Adorno and Horkheimer. As such, the way in which immanent critique is approached has altered in emphasis such that a clear proclivity toward liberal principles can be discerned in the work of Habermas and Honneth.[518] Our reading of Critical Theory demonstrated the way in which the search for such a universal principle from which to begin theorising is a positive move characteristic of the universalising tendency associated with the legacy of the Enlightenment. On the contrary, the realism that is evident in the work of Adorno, while not necessarily justifiable through a conceptual scheme serves to counter subjective with the normative provision of a real totality in which suffering plays a key role, and through which the constant presence of non-identity is made apparent. This modernist ontology serves the prioritisation of suffering because of the essential deficit that accompanies the subject/object relationship; the strategy of disclosure is implied once we allow experience to go beyond the concepts that we are able to formulate and take suffering seriously as an ethical demand. This allows us to understand the intersubjective framing of the problem of harm – the negotiation of new and changing concepts of harm – the be underpinned by the experience of suffering in a way that has ontological weight; in this regard, suffering constitutes an existential demand on the way that we appropriate experience in the form of concepts. In providing this formulation, we have clarified and reformulated the contribution that social science is able to make to the kind of normative evaluative process that Linklater envisages the problem of harm to be subject to.

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[516] Collier, *Critical Realism*, 161.

[517] The accidental nature of truth in this sense operates in a similar manner between both Adorno and Bhaskar's later conceptions. For a summary of Bhaskar's approach, see Mervyn Hartwig, *Dictionary of Critical Realism* (Routledge, 2015), 487. For Adorno's see Fluck, 'The Hardest Service: Conceptions of Truth in Critical International Thought', 232.

[518] For a feminist critique of Habermas, see Fraser, 'What's Critical about Critical Theory?' Fraser later conducted an extended debate with Honneth that pushed this critique forward to include recognition-theoretic views of social justice. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution Or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (Verso, 2003).

Harm, Suffering and Critique in International Studies

In putting forward the implications of the threefold problematic for our attempts to grasp the problem of harm, we have found that the implications for social scientific activity run far deeper than the acknowledgement of a particularly pressing normative commitment. The initial location of our commitments to the world, through which we acknowledge the fundamental impact of position on explanation, leads to a series of issues that force us to consider this finitude and limitation as part of, and not merely an inconvenience to, social scientific investigation. That this partiality may, following the insights of Critical Theory, come to be complicit or permissive of suffering means that accounting for the subject/object dimension of knowledge production is essential if we are to better understand and negotiate the problem of harm. This defence of the essential position of the subject/object relationship gives new life to theoretical concerns in Critical IR that have been ignored in recent trends.[519] Beginning from some of the basic points that this thesis began with, this section aims to put forward some of the implications for theory and critique in the discipline in a way that expands upon its core commitment to the problem of harm.

Re-reading the account of disciplinary change and development that was provided in Chapter 1, we can now see that the continuous concern with the problem of harm that the discipline exhibits involves a series of strategies that rested, in the terms of CR, on a negotiation of the fact-value divide. This highlights the close relationship between ideas of harm and ideas of reality that has been characteristic of the discipline's engagement with ethical issues. In this regard, the dominance of Political Realism over more idealistic approaches can be understood as illustrating the preponderance of objective force over ideas of justice; the problem of harm in this regard could not be understood purely as asking after how we live together, but how we live together *under particular historical conditions*. This clear demonstration of ideas of object adequacy upon the normative attitudes that theory should take indicates a broader pattern by which International Studies, as a developing social science, has changed and altered its emphasis over time in order to better situate itself against harms that are in various ways characteristic of global interdependence.

[519] Kai Jonas Koddenbrock, 'Strategies of Critique in International Relations: From Foucault and Latour towards Marx', *European Journal of International Relations*, 26 August 2014.

That the forms of suffering arising from patterns of interdependence have changed over time is evident. This thesis, however, has argued that the modes of theorising prevalent in the discipline at a given point are closely related to their basis in the reproductive and material aspects of society in a way which precludes transcendental formulations of the good or full comprehension of the object of suffering in general. Phenomenological studies of suffering have argued that such experiences always take place in the context of a particular world, and it is these worlds that are at stake.[520] The argument of the sociology of harm conventions is that we can examine changes in morality and normative conviction, but only in a way that is limited. These limitations, arising from the essentially private nature of suffering as an experience, persists as a motivation despite our attempts to grasp it in any particular form. If International Studies is to consider suffering as a quality of embodied and worldly beings, rather than operating with received concepts of harm that may contribute to harmful practices, it is necessary for us to approach social science in a way that is able to incorporate the myriad complex relationships that subjectivity is implicated in both as a subject and an object. The complexities of doing so can be seen in the strategy embraced by Critical Theory; in placing a concern for the suffering at the core of social science, it raises the problem of harm as an issue of substantive concern for the way in which knowledge is produced.

An essential element of this reorientation concerns the argument that the subject/object relationship has dynamics and qualities that reach beyond what is encapsulated by agents' understandings of it. In their examination of theories in IS, critical realists have sought to put this forward by highlighting the epistemic fallacy and engaging in a process of underlabouring through which the unacknowledged assumption of a real and causally efficacious world is rendered intelligible.[521] This process of critique demonstrates not just the historically embedded nature of theory construction, but also the way in which the geography of the subject/object relationship influences our understanding of processes of normative engagement of which the problem of harm is a substantial component. Highlighted best through Marx's injunction that men make history but not of their own choosing, the possibility of critique rests heavily on how International Studies conceptualises its historical position and delimitation whether this is rendered explicit or not. In putting forward the

[520] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, New Edition (Oxford University Press, U.S.A., 1987).
[521] The implications of which are discussed in Milja Kurki, *Causation in International Relations: Reclaiming Causal Analysis*, 1st Edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 245.

objects of our explanation as relatively intransitive, Critical Realism allows us to examine and situate knowledge claims in the discipline and highlights the normative nature of social scientific engagement in a way that aids this process of reflecting on disciplinary commitments and presuppositions. This orientation toward objectivity allows us in turn to better understand the problem of harm as a core concern of International Studies, and to highlight the discipline's interest in the way it plays out in social science and in social life more broadly.

The way in which concepts lie at the centre of International Studies' way of addressing the world is a necessity at least in part due to the way that the problem of harm prompts the discipline to articulate and explain the abstract determinants of social life and its myriad interactions. In Chapter 3, we saw that this was necessary if the social sciences were to address the increasing complexity of global interconnection; however, in light of the work of the Frankfurt School, we can see that such developments simultaneously operate as a contribution to scientific rationalisation that is at the core of the obscuring of forms of harm in the first place. While it may be the case that reflecting on the violence we do to others, as this thesis has tried to do, is one of the less violent activities the social sciences might engage in, the extent to which social scientific work can serve to reinforce instrumental attitudes toward the experience of suffering is of key concern.[522] The architecture and history of the concept presented in Critical Theory provides a general frame through which we can understand the close interplay between instrumental reason and the problem of harm. That the rampage of instrumental reason identified by Adorno and Horkheimer may constitute a real process does not constitute a historical claim, but rather a normative injunction prompted by historical experience. Identifying the problem of harm as the core of attempts to grasp this dynamic means that our reflexive engagement with concepts needs to be intense, persistent and thoroughgoing; reflexivity is not a task to be engaged in as much as it is a responsibility.

While Critical Realism does little to outline a specific theory of IS, it has provided us with an underlabouring effort that has allowed us to clarify some key social scientific claims – such as the structure/agency debate – with regard to its implications for the way we understand the problem of harm. In particular, Chapter 4 demonstrated the way in which prioritising agency serves to paper over the role of structure in the morphogenetic cycle, and

[522] Patomäki cites Derrida to the effect that reflecting upon the potential violence of our own categories is amongst the least violent activities we can engage in. Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 157.

some ways in which it is essential to our explanations of the problem of harm.[523] In disclosing these relationships, the social sciences begin to reveal a source of ontological engagement that underpins an understanding of the problem of harm as a site of shared labour with potentially emancipatory consequences. In appropriating the real causal basis of suffering through abstraction and concept-driven engagement, the social sciences thus serve to provide a basis for the amelioration of states of suffering by rendering abstract social forces intelligible. The epistemological opportunism that is embraced by Critical Realism formulates this as a transitive epistemic horizon that reflects upon changing fields of objective possibility. That the discipline's engagement with the problem of harm reflects upon both the transitive and intransitive domains in this way allows us to see it as engaged both with questions of 'getting it right' and questions of normative significance in a historical context that provides the shared basis for practical action.

Critique and History in International Studies

This broader interest in the historical situation of being and subjectivity is the key interest of Critical Theory broadly considered, and where it can provide insights into the existential situation of International Studies as it grapples with the problem of harm. The work of Adorno serves to highlight the precarity and dangers that are associated with identity thought, as we have examined throughout this thesis. Despite his negative framing of concept-formation, our examination showed that he nonetheless maintained the importance of identity thought in the lives of subjects as an important facet of ethical engagement. Levine labels this situation the *animus habitandi*, or that in which one abides, by way of response to Morgenthau's *animus dominandi*. Under this formulation, the social sciences have an important role in embodying the full force of the non-identical against structures of meaning that marginalise or oppress the voices of the suffering.[524]

This approach demonstrates a view that is approached by Critical Realism but remains limited due to the conceptual or definitional nature of scientific development.[525] The

[523] Archer, *Realist Social Theory*, 159.
[524] Levine, *Recovering International Relations*, 53.
[525] Hartwig addresses the way that this 'closes' totality, providing a starting-point for hermeneutic enquiry. Mervyn Hartwig, 'Introduction to Roy Bhaskar, The Possibility of Naturalism', 2014, 22. This is not to suggest that critical realism rejects such enquiry, but that it positions it with regard to a set of presuppositions and situating its value. Similarly, Patomäki notes that the transcendental question of 'how is x possible' at the core

historically-particular situation that knowledge is produced in ensures that attempts to grasp that situation are formulated differently according to position, as Bhaskar's position-practice system puts forward.[526] However, this holds wide-ranging implications for the way in which theories attempt to negotiate the problem of harm from which this thesis began and its potential for solidarity between different experiences based on the common principle of suffering. If social life does not form a whole, but is instead stratified and divided such that suffering does not constitute a unitary principle from which to begin, then the conclusion is that the opportunities provided by social scientific engagement are fragmented and partial in proportion to this. In this regard, suffering is only relatively intransitive, but nonetheless can serve as a starting point from which the shared effort that the problem of harm constitutes can be laid out in a way that highlights the links between disciplines and areas, rather than purely their differences. In putting forward the discipline as characterised by a shared aspect of moral and ethical concern, as we did in the first chapter, we both highlight its potential and acknowledge that socialisation goes 'all the way down'. In dialectical fashion, this means that subjective reason cannot be expelled as a factor but is an essential facet of our engagement with the problem of harm; it is qualified in a way that does not isolate social science from social life more broadly, but immerses it in broader forms of ethical engagement and negotiation.

Understanding social scientific enquiry in this wider context allows us to understanding the contradictory and exclusionary nature of theories, at root, as less a function of varying epistemological strategies and more an expression of different embodied relationships to the world, of which suffering is one important characteristic. In this regard, acknowledging the problem of harm as a core concern of the discipline serves to undermine the protective identity-foundations of the current state of disciplinary pluralism, and instead bases social science on an activity which is by definition inclusive and tends towards dialogue between marginalised ethical standpoints. On the constitutive understanding of history-as-ontology put forward earlier in this chapter, the intensive confrontation between conceptual framings serves to highlight previously underarticulated struggles and contradictions in society. As such, the reorientation of IS toward the object of suffering can

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of scientific enquiry 'freezes, so to speak' the social world in question.' Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 91.

[526] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 40–41.

also be understood as a reorientation of the history from which our engagement with the problem of harm proceeds.

As Patomäki has argued, the importance of history lies not only with its influence on material possibility but also in the way its negotiation is subject to political appropriation.[527] In this regard, we can see the fragmentation of the discipline along the heuristic lines that the problem of harm provides has important effects on the ethical possibilities that social science can engage with. In this regard, it draws close to Benjamin's insights concerning the nature of fragmented history that had such an impact on Adorno.[528] Rather than a single positive history, both authors attempted to discern the indeterminate role that historical materials played in social life. On this understanding, historical action involved not only the actualising of individual circumstances, but was involved in an appropriation of history such that struggle served to bring to bear the unarticulated historical force of suffering. The messianic aspect that is evident in this strain of thought operates less as an object to strive for, and more as a regulatory principle that persistently, and often uncomfortably, serves to locate theoretical activity as a form of historical labour despite its constant drive to move beyond it.

Both the camps of Critical Theory and Critical Realism would acknowledge that the meaning of an action remains underdetermined after the fact; there is little absolute confirmation of whether our interventions in the problem of harm will operate in the services of the intended cause. The ultimate result of our consideration of the subject/object is that concepts are only ever coincident with the broader historical problem of harm regardless of their instrumental content. As such, social science occupies a necessary position but is qualified against the problem of harm as an impossible demand upon its ability to grasp the world.

The Object of Suffering: Toward a Strategy for Object-Oriented International Studies

Understanding the discipline of International Studies as oriented toward the object of suffering leads to several points concerning the strategies that might follow. First among these concerns the way in which there are few disciplinary boundaries that are respected in this orientation. Insofar as the determination of academic fields by concepts serves to protect

[527] Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 200.
[528] Adorno, *Prisms*, 233.

the identity-foundations of particular fields of study, they obscure the objective value that they present. Rather, a social science that takes into account the implications of Critical Theory in its engagement with the problem of harm should seek to locate the practice and aporias of the discipline in the interconnections and stratification of society itself. In this respect, Critical Realism provides ontological grounding for many of the claims that have been advanced by standpoint theorists.[529] In this context, the sociology of harm conventions offers one point at which the ethical implications of exclusionary practices in the discipline are made abundantly clear. However, the way that our reformulation of Linklater's sociology tended toward an examination of different layers of stratification demonstrates that the process of world disclosure cannot be conducted purely at the level of International Studies. While the discipline's focus on the highest levels of social interconnection puts it in a position to address abstract and structural forms of harm, a transdisciplinary approach is necessary if harm as an emergent property is to be addressed.

As we saw in the fourth chapter, the acknowledgement that social phenomena are not singularly caused but are instead the result of multiple and stratified determinations itself militates against any claim to disciplinary autonomy. In arguing that suffering can serve as a possible, but by no means the only, basis for this form of enquiry, this thesis has highlighted various forms of social pathology that emerge from the way in which instrumentally articulated forms of knowledge lie at the basis of the problem of harm in modern society. While the contradictions that were at the core of the arguments of Marx and Hegel may have passed, the general importance of contradictions remains; it is in discovering and engaging with suffering 'between the cracks' of seemingly totalising concepts of harm that we begin to see their fragmented and partial nature. Rather than engaging in the formulation of ideal concepts, this is a historical task; it places the focus on suffering in order to reveal social pathologies and further develops Linklater's historical framing of the problem of harm. In this regard, it begins not with 'pure' concepts of harm but their social emergence from historical circumstances. This operates in opposition to the way in which hegemonic concepts have served as the vehicle for stubborn ontologies that conceal their emergence as a result of historically contested sites of meaning for worldly activity.[530]

[529] See the debate between Lawson and Harding, Lawson, 'Feminism, Realism, and Universalism'; Sandra Harding, 'The Case For Strategic Realism: A Response To Lawson', *Feminist Economics* 5, no. 3 (1 January 1999): 127–33.
[530] Hartwig, 'Introduction to Roy Bhaskar, Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation', 16.

Sceptics may respond that such an approach is merely business as usual in a disciplinary field where pluralism allows for an eclectic approach to data collection and epistemic activity.[531] However, the approach proposed here is one in which the problems that International Studies orients toward emerge from the life of society itself, and is characterised by it in a way that has significant consequences for the manner of its ethical engagement. In this regard, the way that we saw the problem of harm arising time and again in the discipline as a core concern demonstrates that IS is not a neutral scientific endeavour, but is shot through with ethical content. To this extent, the forefathers of the discipline, whose experience of the First World War was so significant in prompting their engagement with the problems that the international poses, are significantly closer to the kind of vocational approach advocated here than we find with the rendering of the discipline-as-science in the field after Kenneth Waltz.[532] The threefold problematic that the problem of harm poses for knowledge production, rather than seeking to isolate science from ethical engagement, insists on the links between them. In this regard, IS as a social science is concerned not with the production of timeless or absolute truths, but with labouring on and working with historically-placed ontologies in a stance of ethical concern. In short, it reformulates the question of how we live together historically, moving from asking 'how shall we live?' to 'how shall we live under these conditions?'

Conclusion

This chapter has served to develop the arguments found in this thesis in the direction of its implications for debates centring on the problem of harm in IS, and to examine how this might be done in a reflexive fashion. The result of this effort is less a synthesis or system, and more a constellation of factors and orientations from which no easy solution is rendered evident; the threefold problematic that Critical Theory poses cannot merely be solved or assumed away. Despite the problems that accompany social science in its engagement with the problem of harm, it is not the case that our incorporation of the subject/object paradigm in the process of this investigation is the imposition of a perpetually anxious disposition upon

[531] As put forward by Sil and Katzenstein. Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics: Reconfiguring Problems and Mechanisms across Research Traditions', *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 2 (June 2010): 411–431.

[532] Humphreys considers the idea of theory that Waltz argues for. See Adam R. C. Humphreys, 'The Heuristic Application of Explanatory Theories in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 2 (1 June 2011): 259.

the discipline. Rather, this anxiety forces us to acknowledge the limited (but still important) role that social scientific investigation can play, and suggests that we might understand this anxiety as, at root, an ethical injunction motivated by the problem of harm in its wider social context. In scientific terms, it asks us to begin to address the huge gaps in knowledge that issues such as structural harm present through what Collier has called the 'methodological primacy of the pathological', such that we might begin to scale what is a scientific and theoretical edifice.[533]

That this thesis has attempted to address the problem of harm both in an essentially social-scientific manner via Critical Realism and as an ethical-epistemological problem via Critical Theory has not been a flight of theoretical fancy. It has instead been a response to the way that the problem of harm confronts subjects in a way that is both an instantly recognisable experience and a remarkably elusive concept. In a historical sense, the threats that Adorno and Horkheimer identified as 'nature' to us in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* serve to highlight this problem; it is not merely that we are not imaginative enough with words, but that suffering is a real problem that International Studies in particular seeks to address through the process which we understand as the problem of harm. This places severe demands on developments in social thought due to the way that they can serve to reinforce or provoke such practices; a problem which we have raised as the problem of reflexivity. The response of this chapter – that such a problem constitutes a real existential and historical situation for the development of social science and our explanations of harm in society – demonstrates the extent to which reflexivity is both an impossible demand and a ceaseless motion in the scientific process which can only be approached through a persistent commitment to engagement in the world.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that a characteristic element of the thought of Adorno was his awareness both of the problems that came with abstract thought and its simultaneous necessity on ethical grounds. It is only by working through the concept that we are able to begin addressing abstract and structural causal factors in the production of harm; but the case remains that these developments are undecidable to the extent that we cannot preclude the harmful processes that such work might contribute to. Nonetheless, the aspects of a Critical Realist approach to social science embraced here constitute a strategy for investigation that is able to acknowledge the role that judgement plays in the instantiation of

[533] Collier, *Critical Realism*, 165.

ethical practices, of which social science is only one. This serves as a way that we can maintain the democratic and intersubjectively-focussed idea of social science that was put forward by Linklater in addition to the subject/object paradigm focussed on in this thesis.

We concluded by proposing some strategies for the way in which IS might develop its understanding of the problem of harm in a way that does justice to its preoccupation with the various aspects of the threefold problematic. Key to this is the way that IS, on the understanding put forward here, begins not with the identity of its object of study with received concepts but with its failure to encapsulate suffering; this normative principle highlights the work of the discipline and its ethical consequences as a form of engaged labour as opposed to isolated abstraction. Against a form of eclectic pluralism, the understanding of the discipline that follows from this involves the intensive mediation of explanations and perspectives such that we might better articulate the deeply interconnected and stratified state of an interconnected – and interdependent – world. This corresponds to the increasing complexity of the problem of harm as it continues to develop, and in doing so, forces us to consider disciplinary boundaries in a new light as problematic reifications that might disguise or render epiphenomenal important sources of normative concern. As such, the epistemologically opportunistic understanding of how social science is conducted, found in both Critical Theory and Critical Realism, serves our orientation toward harm as a key object of concern.

Conclusion

> 'Our shared exposure to precarity is but one ground of our potential equality and our reciprocal obligations to produce together conditions of liveable life.'
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> - Judith Butler, *Can One Lead a Good Life in a Bad Life?*[534]

The contemporary global subject is beset by uncertainty over how to live rightly in a world where seemingly basic social practices can contribute to suffering on the other side of the world. The interconnections and interdependencies between people are becoming longer and more abstract, and this puts us in new and challenging ethical situations with regard to the way in which we can unknowingly harm others. Foremost among these questions concerns how we know what we know about our interactions with others in a world where we are often involved in calling upon structures in a practical sense that we cannot fully explain, and in which such interactions are rife with unintended consequences.[535] While the answers and responses to this ethical tension have varied historically, it is also the case that some negotiation over how we deal with others and what constitutes harm is immanent to nearly every society that we are familiar with, as Linklater notes.[536] This thesis has attempted to understand how the discipline has engaged with this process – the problem of harm – and how it might understand its engagement in light of the insights of Critical Theory, a philosophical approach characterised by a deep preoccupation with suffering and its relationship to knowledge. To this end, we put forward the core research question: '**What implications does Critical Theory have for the interrogation of the problem of harm in International Studies?'**

More specifically, we have approached the problem of harm from two principle directions. The first of these provided a reading of International Studies that served to highlight the close relationship that the discipline holds to the problem of harm as a form of

[534] Judith Butler, 'Can One Lead a Good Life in a Bad Life', accessed 11 August 2015.
[535] Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 6.
[536] Andrew Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations*, 1st Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29.

ethical engagement, and articulated this relationship through the lens of Critical Theory. On this reading, ethical problems that harm poses are articulated as problems for the production of knowledge; the problem of object adequacy, of critical value and of reflexivity. These problems, and the relationship between them, serve to highlight that International Studies does not merely reflect upon the problem of harm but is – and can be – an important contributor to processes of change and restraint that might contribute to the amelioration of harmful practices.

Following from this, the second aspect of our engagement with the problem of harm was to consider the implications of Critical Theory for the kinds of theory and study the discipline can or should engage in. In doing so it engaged with, and elaborated upon Linklater's attempt to formulate a sociology of harm conventions in light of the threefold problematic that Critical Theory raises. In doing so, we argued for a form of social scientific engagement based on the principles of Critical Realism, and interrogated these with a view to putting forward its consequences for future engagements with the problem of harm.

Summary of Thesis Arguments by Chapter

In addressing the problem of harm, this thesis has sought to engage with it in the complex and interconnected manner that is demanded by Critical Theory. It has, therefore, attempted to address the problem of harm both as a problem of explanation with regard to how we explain it sociologically, but also to formulate an understanding of how such accounts become implicated in the broader process of normative engagement that the problem of harm presents, and how they might contribute to this. While the problem of harm can be understood both as a historical-sociological object of study and as an exercise in moral and ethical questioning, a combination of the two is more characteristic of the kinds of debates that we see in International Studies. In this regard, we have focussed on the links between the aspects of the threefold problematic in an attempt to understand the discipline's potential contribution to the problem of harm in a broad sense that is commensurate with their complex relationship.

In Chapter One, we engaged in a reading of several key debates in the discipline in order to highlight the problem of harm as a core concern that crossed many of its traditional dividing lines and objects of study. In providing such a reading, we argued that the discipline

could be understood as holding a particular evaluative and normative stance toward the world that was underpinned by an engagement with the problem of harm. Key to this understanding was the strategy of reading the discipline as one constantly in transition; not merely a set of theories from which the conclusions follow naturally, but a social effort that seeks to adapt itself in light of changed historical circumstances. By observing changes in the discipline in this fashion, we saw that these conversations were not merely driven by an ever-deepening understanding of an object of study, but by a persistent and pressing need to engage in ethical debates surrounding the problem of harm. On this reading then, it is possible to understand International Studies as engaging directly in the kind of ethical negotiation that Linklater highlights in a way which goes beyond studying their emergence and development.

In examining the direction of five debates in the discipline, we found that the problem of harm has been formulated in a variety of ways that included questions of scientific adequacy, ethical responsibility and strategies for social change. However, it is Critical Theory which serves as the point from which these questions can be considered in a connected and interdependent fashion. By bringing to light the implication of the theorist in the objects and processes of social scientific study, Critical Theory points toward a way through which we might begin to understand the work of International Studies as directly involved in negotiating the problem of harm. This involvement is characterised by a series of problems which reconceptualise the problem of harm as a series of problems for knowledge production; the problems of object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity, the interconnected nature of which may have implications for the way we understand the problem of harm in the discipline. In suggesting that our ability to address the problem of harm rested on our understanding of the threefold problematic, we proposed that an engagement with the roots of Critical Theory in the work of the Frankfurt School could allow us to more fully understand its implications.

While the problem of harm as an ongoing social process is unlikely to ever be fully resolved, the way in which Critical Theory poses it as a complex and multifaceted problem for knowledge production holds out a potential avenue for reflecting upon its significance in the context of IS. In particular, we saw in the work of authors such as Adorno that the purposive nature of instrumental reason, later highlighted by theorists such as Cox in International Studies, both provided a way to understand the complex interconnections of modern life and a means by which the suffering that it caused can become obscured. This mode of engagement was a generalisation of the Marxian problem-field to the broader

problem of knowledge production; it is the ability to abstract that is both a cause of suffering and alienation and the greatest chance for emancipatory practice. This generalisation is significant for our understanding of the problem of harm because in highlighting the close relationship between suffering and knowledge, Critical Theory allows us to relate differing approaches to the problem of harm to a common core of embodied human experience. In the work of Horkheimer and Adorno, the natural core of suffering operates as 'the other of reason' that moves beyond our attempts to conceptualise it, only becoming apparent in experience. The tendency toward abstraction, so necessary in the struggle for survival, comes to dominate our point of view such that we are unable to appreciate the fullness of being; in forgetting this, the march of instrumental reason leads us to become estranged from the object of our ethical concern.

It is at this level we find the problem of harm formulated as a problem of conceptualisation; harm is the conceptual appropriation of the real experience of suffering, limited in its development due to historically specific modes of objectification. This formulation allows us to understand the threefold problematic as arising from the relationship between concepts and experience. The problem of object adequacy concerns the way in which accounts of harm can maximise the correspondence between our descriptions of social reality and our experience of it. The problem of critical value concerns our mode of ethical concern and the way in which our explanations can be harnessed to mitigate or in some way manage the proliferation of harmful practices. The problem of reflexivity, finally, arises from the need to alter change our concepts in light of their potentially violent or reificatory effects, and to account for the partial nature of our judgements. This constellation of problems can be understood as arising from the combination of normative and scientific attitudes that International Studies engages in when it approaches the problem of harm. However, in the case of Critical Theory, Adorno in particular would argue that the adequacy of approaching social life in this way would always be deficient; the almost entirely alienated form of modern life meant that the promise held out by ethical concern would never be fulfilled. Nonetheless, in the first chapter we saw that in International Studies, the problem of harm as an object of concern is alive and well. Having gained a fuller understanding of the significance of the problem of harm through the lens of Critical Theory, we proposed to engage with the work of Linklater, whose sociology of harm conventions constitutes a key point of engagement with harm in International Studies, in order to examine the way in which it fulfils the problems raised by Critical Theory

While Critical Theory presents a strong argument for the threefold problematic to be understood as an interconnected whole, it nonetheless emphasised critical value to the extent that the explanatory role of the social sciences, and in our case International Studies, became ever more marginalised. In addressing the work of Linklater, the aim was to understand how we might approach the problem of harm in a historical and sociological fashion while still maintaining the form of concern that Critical Theory puts forward. In beginning from a sociological framing, Linklater highlights the problem of harm as a process that is negotiated and renegotiated every day through the practices of subjects who are often unaware of the long term consequences of social action. Through the adoption of various historical vantage-points, Linklater is able to demonstrate the way in which forms of historical social engagement serve to negotiate and justify harm conventions that may be unfamiliar to us today.

However, in focussing on the object-adequacy of historical accounts of harm, Linklater's sociology of harm conventions does not fully formulate a link between the kinds of accounts produced in social science and the critical value that they present. In particular, in formulating an account of object adequacy that is tied to the relative involvement or detachment of the social scientist, it is unclear what kind of status explanations of more abstract forms of harm such as structural harm might have for the negotiation of harm conventions in wider society. This problem is further exacerbated by the political stance taken by the Eliasian sociology that Linklater draws upon; while Linklater is clear that social scientific work has normative value, the detached sociology that Elias argued for holds out an eventual but by no means certain role for social science in engaging with the normative issues that the problem of harm provokes. This uncertain relationship, we argued, might be clarified by engaging in precisely the kind of ontological reflection that Eliasian sociology often rejects. In proposing to reconstruct Linklater's sociology of harm conventions in a way that was compatible with such forms of reflection, our aim was to preserve Linklater's important insights concerning the problem of harm while better clarifying and maintaining the normative goals that he sets.

The fourth chapter undertook this reconstruction by outlining an approach to the sociology of harm conventions which draws upon the philosophy of science, and particularly Critical Realism. In particular, our attempt to formulate a viable way of addressing social structure as an important determinant of harmful practices led us to adopt an understanding of social life as characterised by real causal forces that were both emergent and stratified; they

arose from social life in a way that allowed us to address social structure as a *sui generis* object of knowledge. This led us to a more adequate explanation of structural harm, but also allowed us to engage in characterising the role that social structures play in the determination and influencing of the problem of harm more broadly. Despite the unobservability of such structures, we argued that the process of structuring was one that could be accounted for in social science through the development of concepts and a reliance on the subject/object distinction as a way of characterising the problem of harm. In doing so, Linklater's account of detachment becomes subsumed under an understanding of social reality which is better able to account for the way in which failings of knowledge is underpinned by the nature of the objects to which it seeks to refer.

In accounting for the gap between the world and our accounts of it, the Critical Realist approach provides a way of understanding the recalcitrance of the world in the face of our goals; the relationship of the discipline to the problem of harm lies in the possibility of better accounting for the world such that negotiation and debate centred on the idea of harm can be better informed. Social life, we suggest, is subject to unplanned processes in much the same way as Eliasians would recognise, and the development of concepts provides a key point at which ethically informed action to ameliorate harm can be developed in this context. This operates along two axes which together provide the grounds for explanatory critique in the social sciences. Firstly, explanations are critical of those that have gone before to the extent that they are better able to account for the preconditions of suffering. Secondly, they are critical of the causes of mistaken prior beliefs and the institutions or processes that give rise to them. While the first is in line with Linklater's broad argument that the sociology of harm conventions might provide an orienting function, the second outlines a source of critical value that is intrinsic to the practice of social science and its role in navigating the subject/object relationship. In doing so, the problems of object adequacy and critical value are accounted for and related such that we are able to maintain the specific contribution that IS is able to make to the problem of harm.

Chapter 5 developed the consequences of this reconstruction, arguing that the reconstruction of Linklater's sociology put forward the objective position of the theorist and the discipline as a perennial question for how it might understand the problem of harm. In doing so, it elaborated upon the third aspect of the threefold problematic provoked by Critical Theory – that of reflexivity. Arguing that the realist reformulation of Linklater's ideas tended toward a particular way of understanding this, we argued that the philosophical negation

inaugurated in Adorno's work and the account of object-adequacy introduced in Chapter 4 might initially seem opposed, but in fact could be understood in terms of each other when centred on the problem of harm. In considering Critical Theory in terms of Critical Realism, we argued that the essential insight of Adorno – that suffering could not be subsumed under any particular concept – was preserved in the realist characterisation of science as an ongoing task with a particular focus on disclosing the determinants of social life. Similarly, while Critical Theory would be intensely suspicious of the realist claim to knowledge of the world, Adorno's focus on working through existing concepts rather than attempting to move beyond them ensures that a realist focus on stratification and emergence provides an approach to social science which recognises the lines of failure that Critical Theory emphasises.

In holding the perspectives of Critical Theory and Critical Realism in a productive tension, we are therefore able to account for the threefold problematic that arises from our analysis of the problem of harm, while still maintaining the contribution that IS is able to make to our understanding of it. This contribution, we argued, is best characterised through an account of social science which focuses on the way that it labours on concepts, working with and through them to provide more adequate explanations whose critical content is dependent on their ability to express the world. The problem of harm, as a consistent object of fascination for the discipline, provides a point from which we can understand the nature of this labour as a shared task in a discipline characterised by fragmentation and which has developed historically into a centre of gravity for many seemingly disparate forms of scholarly concern. In doing so, we are better able to understand IS' focus on the problem of harm as a historical vocation that derives from its ethical and scientific content in combination, thus pressing it in a vital position from which we can address it as it changes and develops.

What Implications does Critical Theory have for the Interrogation of the Problem of harm in International Studies?

This thesis began as an investigation into how Critical Theory can contribute to discussions concerning the problem of harm in International Studies. In doing so, began by providing a reading of International Studies that highlighted its consistent concern with harm, and attempted to put forward the contribution that Critical Theory makes in formulating this

concern as a problem for knowledge production. While broader conclusions will be drawn from the arguments made here, the immediate answer to the question is this: that **Critical Theory provides a way of mediating a variety of strategies for engagement in International Studies and making their connections apparent. In doing so, it simultaneously pushes us toward a more object-adequate understanding of the problem of harm on an ethical basis, and a deeper understanding of the normative demands of the problem of harm on a scientific one.** In this regard, the concern with harm that we find in International Studies operates as a broader pattern of the social negotiation that Linklater calls the problem of harm; it first seeks to name suffering, and engages in a process of articulating the subtleties that escaped this first act of reification. In this way, the problem of harm presents a shared historical task for the discipline, one that Critical Theory constantly provokes in its refusal to accept the separation of science and ethical engagement.

In the course of this investigation, we have largely abstained from the attempt to ground some fundamental faculty as the organ from which critique sallies forth against reification. While it presents a contribution to our understanding of how Critical Theory might operate in its attempt to highlight the opportunities and pitfalls that International Studies encounters, it is not an attempt to ground a systematic approach to critical theorising. It has instead sought to approach Critical Theory as it did International Studies; a set of practices that hold a family resemblance; for Critical Theory, this lies in its shared practice of negation against contemporary historical circumstances and the chastening of concepts in the service of normative insight. Critical Theory thus stands in relation to International Studies not as an external *agent provocateur*, but as an essential aspect of the scientific process through which our answers to the problem of harm can become more adequate to changing historical and structural circumstances.

If we understand this process against the long and changing history of the problem of harm, it quickly becomes apparent that the kind of tension that Critical Theory implies should be at the core of the problem of harm in International Studies is not one that can ever be fully resolved. In order to prevent the reification of any 'final' concept of harm, this thesis has engaged with and elaborated upon Linklater's understanding of harm as a persistent area of social engagement and negotiation, and has focussed heavily on the historically contingent way that International Studies might engage with this. In this respect, this thesis agrees with Linklater's adopting of an ultimately long-term viewpoint for the development of social science, but from an analytical vantage-point centred on the subject/object relation from

which the distinction between suffering and harm arises. It was Adorno's conjecture that the reconciliation of this state of affairs was unlikely, if not impossible, under the alienating conditions of modern life.[537] Nonetheless, International Studies continues labouring on the problem of harm, in a variety of ways, demonstrating the remarkably persistent nature of the discipline's normative commitment despite considerable variation in its objects of study. In insisting on the complexity and interconnected nature of the threefold problematic, Critical Theory pushes International Studies to maintain its grounding in the suffering of real subjects and its historical situation after Auschwitz, after Hiroshima, after Abu Ghraib.

Beginning with the non-identity of suffering and harm, rather than harm's conceptual adequacy, has the result of providing a link between the object-adequacy of explanations and their critical value. This is not merely a theoretical issue, but highlights the way in which the development of explanations in International Studies is centred on a praxeological gap that is a definitive aspect of its vocational calling; it attempting to mitigate suffering through the development of concepts of harm, the discipline operates in a fundamentally *concerned* way.[538] This thesis has attempted to render intelligible the way in which this gap operates in practice, putting forward the changing balance between object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity as the nexus of critical activity and debate. The result has been a contribution to how we might understand the relationship of various forms of knowledge to each other, and how our analyses of concrete social reality might give rise to a recognition of the inherently normative dynamics of social life.[539]

Critical Theory, in framing suffering negatively, further serves to highlight that the problem of harm does not only act as a field of contested definition through which we might improve our concepts, but also as a reminder that the failure to do so constitutes a complicity in the persistence of suffering in the world. Analytically, this thesis has developed this point in formulating the commitments of a realist social ontology in an ethical, rather than purely metaphysical fashion that arises from the normative call that both Critical Theory and International Studies seek to respond to. In this case, a failure to properly engage the problem of harm is not merely a failure of theoretical knowledge, but a failing of theoretical knowledge whose very basis lies with the promise to engage with the reality of suffering. A particularly pressing demand toward reflection and reconstruction can, therefore, be

[537] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 344–47.
[538] Levine, *Recovering International Relations*, 56–57.
[539] Mervyn Hartwig, 'Introduction to Roy Bhaskar, The Possibility of Naturalism', 2014, 22,.

discerned in the power dynamics and partiality of the discipline whose increasing democratisation is a key aspect of taking the problem of harm seriously.

As a way of reflecting on the presuppositions of ideas and concepts, Critical Theory provides a way for International Studies to reflect on its engagement with the problem of harm. This thesis has sought to show how this is the case in its characterising of the various tensions that build up around historical problems that prompt both positive and negative contributions at the same time, tensions which are maintained only if we understand the social sciences to be historically-grounded efforts toward qualitatively better knowledge. While it does not 'solve' the problem of harm, the sociology of harm conventions and its reconstruction provide one way in which the purported pessimism of Critical Theory can be channelled toward a productive engagement with the problem of harm within the discipline of International Relations. The reading of both International Relations and Critical Theory put forward here, then, provides a new avenue by which Critical Theory can continue in its role of breaking open patterns of theoretical reification.[540] In presenting the problem of harm as an ontological starting-point rather than an epistemological one, it constitutes an explicitly normative project through which we are constantly reminded of the Janus-faced practice of critique; a practice which is only able to promise great vitality in the acknowledgement of its grandest failures.

Implications of the Thesis for the Discipline of International Studies

Throughout this thesis, our approach has been similar to that of Linklater, considering International Studies as one practice among may that might serve to orient people toward better understandings of the problem of harm they confront in social life. Rather than engaging purely in theoretical debate, it has sought to qualify the problem of harm against the experience of suffering as a key distinction prompted by Critical Theory, and as such has focussed on the ontological distinction between the two. While this thesis does not constitute, or seek, a unified methodological framework for International Studies, it has attempted to clarify the way in which we might relate the ethical impulse of the discipline to the objects that it refers to in the context of the problem of harm. This effort has been centred on the nature of the problem of harm, which in line with Linklater has been taken as a real object,

[540] Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory', 48.

amenable to sociological investigation. With this being the case, the following broad arguments have been made:

1) That the problem of harm constitutes an object that is amenable to sociological investigation in International Studies as an aspect of its prevalence in everyday life. This exercise constitutes an attempt to reflect upon the philosophical and normative commitments of the discipline in the context of one of its most persistent areas of concern.
2) That Critical Theory highlights the role of our concepts of harm to be social appropriations of the experience of suffering, and as such is amenable to a process of critique through which our concepts might better capture that experience. In doing so, the problem of harm becomes understood as a set of problems for the production of knowledge.
3) That our understanding of how we might explain harm through the aspects of object adequacy, critical value and reflexivity is best served by a commitment to a realist conception of its significance and constitution due to its ability to sustain and balance the need for scientific and normative engagement that it calls for.
4) And that the mode of explanation that the realist conception of science necessitates in the context of the problem of harm tends toward a particular form of worldly critique. In doing so, it unifies the various problems that harm provokes under a broader understanding of the problem of harm as a site of shared historical labour.

There are some points at which this line of argumentation has been subject to argumentative and pragmatic, rather than purely logical justification. Indeed, our engagement with the problem of harm, as indeed was Linklater's, that of Critical Theory and many of the debates considered in the first chapter, was prompted by a historical interest in the ethical concerns prompted by changing patterns of global interdependence. As such, it began not with an abstract theoretical basis, but at a site of peculiar and common recurrence in human affairs, as well as within the discipline of International Studies itself.[541] While this is not, perhaps, the *a priori* principle that the great systematisers may dream of, the harm we do to others constitutes a point at which many disparate viewpoints converge and serves to

[541] Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, 29.

highlight the ethical content at play in even the most austere forms of scientism. Critical Theory highlights this feature of the discipline in a way that demonstrates its complex and interconnected character, and allows us to understand one of the centres of gravity around which the 'broad church' that is International Studies continues to rotate.

In a manner that is intended to be close to the spirit, if not the letter, of Adorno's work and the critique of the fact/value divide put forward in Critical Realism, this thesis has sought to highlight the potential political implications of conceptual thought on the basis of its historical limitations. However, it has attempted to push beyond a tendency to marginalise the role of abstraction and reason on this basis, and highlighted that the social sciences can be as much an embodiment of normative commitment as they are the site of pure instrumentality. In both arguing for the history and architecture of concepts in the vein of Critical Theory, and adopting the analytical histories of emergence found in Critical Realism, we have put forward a way of studying the problem of harm that is capable of reflecting upon its own limitations while still maintaining normative content. If the problems posed by forms of social structure in harm force us into a position of uncertainty with regard to social action aimed at its amelioration, then International Studies, in focussing on the highest levels of social stratification and interconnection, is a discipline well placed to address this uncertainty. That the core concern of the problem of harm is essential to social reproduction shows us that in doing so, it orients toward a source of great normative insight while simultaneously shouldering a significant burden of responsibility.

In some respects, this is more radical than the poststructuralist attack on the concept of truth precisely because it acknowledges epistemic relativity while refusing to admit that it constitutes the whole story. In grounding International Studies on an ontological principle, it acknowledges the multiplicity of historical origins and ideologies while taking the ethical step to ensure that we never slip into the conclusion that our discourse lacks any real referent.[542] As a site of historical labour, knowledge produced concerning the problem of harm has ethical consequences that arise through the reality of interconnection and interpenetration. Throughout this thesis, we have argued that incorporating the dimension of the subject/object relationship is the only way in which we might begin to circumscribe the world beyond the play of discourse. While other schools of thought, such as new materialism, are beginning to also engage in this form of argument, a restriction of scientific fact-making

[542] Andrew Sayer, *Realism and Social Science* (Sage, 2000), 76–77.

to the realm of the empirical means that the enterprise remains limited from the point of view of this thesis and with regard to the problems that harm raises.[543] It has been a long-running misconception of the Critical Realist project that the real-world principle is an article of faith or belief, and one that is only now being addressed.[544] As a contribution to that conversation in International Studies, this thesis has attempted to illustrate the role of Critical Realism in bringing the practice and objects of science within ethical concern, rather than its opposite. Secondly, while there may be readings of Bhaskar's work that might suggest a simple correspondence between explanations and reality, this project has focussed on the relationship between ontological and epistemological reflection in a way that renders the practices of Critical Theory and Critical Realism as intertwined, rather than separate, exercises.[545] When centred upon the problem of harm, this thesis has argued that each is substantially enhanced by the exchange.

In sociological terms, the account of social scientific activity given here permits a way for International Studies to talk about structural limitations and causal emergence in a way that maintains its contribution as a social science; in grounding its conceptual work on ontology, it fills the sociological deficit that is the legacy of normative standards such as those of Habermas.[546] In this respect, the understanding of world disclosure put forward here does not rule out the importance of the kinds of intersubjective evaluation that Linklater seems to favour, but supplements them in a way that conceptualises explanation as placing demands both on the intersubjective and subject/object axes. In doing so, it opens up the avenue for specifically social scientific explanations of social structure in the context of the problem of harm, rendering intelligible the complex and changing forms that global interconnection takes. The process of scientific engagement that we conceptualised through Critical Realism is intended to orient explanations in International Studies such that these forms of interconnection are bought within the sphere of ethical concern; in doing so, it

[543] For a summary of the failings of new materialism in IR with regard to critique, see Kai Jonas Koddenbrock, 'Strategies of Critique in International Relations: From Foucault and Latour towards Marx', *European Journal of International Relations*, 26 August 2014.

[544] In particular, recent discussions in International Studies have centred around the '5%' difference between critical realists such as Patomäki, pragmatists such as Jackson and sophisticated empiricists such as Humphreys. The discussions have concluded that the differences consist largely in the politics of each theory, with realists in particular adopting a transformationalist view that can be associated with Marxism.

[545] For a critique of simple correspondence within International Studies, see Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations : Critical Realism and the (re)construction of World Politics* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 155.

[546] McCarthy, 'Rationality and Relativism: Habermas's "Overcoming" of Hermeneutics', 76–77.

attempts to make our concepts more adequate to the experience of suffering. In grounding the problem of harm ontologically, the realist approach to suffering provides a strong regulatory function that forces us to reflect on the potential reifications we produce at every stage of the scientific process.

In placing the existential condition of suffering at the core of the problem of harm, Critical Theory holds wide-ranging implications for the conduct of International Studies, many of which centre on the potential dangers that accompany social scientific enquiry. In attempting to develop an understanding of social science that is adequate to the task, this thesis has sought to circumscribe, rather than define, the particular demands that suffering places on the way that we produce knowledge. In taking the problem of harm as a core concern, and suffering as a key ontological principle, it leads us to consider the consequences of taking the problem of harm seriously in a way that has implications for thought that reach beyond the demands of any particular instance of suffering; this is what renders the realist wager made here a conscious reflection on ethical practice in social science rather than a mere article of faith.[547] In this, the continued need to reflect on such practices is made clear by Adorno, whose most famous positive statement that 'to write poetry after Auschwitz would be barbaric.'[548] This easily quotable soundbite is often quoted without the later qualification; that we are called to lend a voice to suffering due to its maintenance of the fullness of life against the forces of reification.[549] In this regard, the pitfalls that accompany International Studies in its concern with the problem of harm at no point remove the call, or the responsibility, to continue in the shared historical labour that the problem of harm is constituted by.

This process of historical labour is what we consider to be the existential condition of knowledge in the discipline, or the way in which we attempt to orient ourselves to the objective conditions that we experience. That one explanation is superior to another, and can better serve us in our engagement with the problem of harm in its ethical fullness, can only be understood in this concrete historical context. In this regard, the realism that both Critical Theory and Critical Realism argue for is characteristic of a practical orientation toward the world. This practical orientation, naturally, comes with its own assumptions and concepts that need to be reflected upon and, perhaps, significantly chastened as a continuation of the task

[547] Collier, *Critical Realism*, 170–81.
[548] Adorno, *Prisms*, 34.
[549] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 362–63.

that we have begun here.[550] This tends toward an understanding of the discipline as a social project and allows us to consider its social role in ways that hold potentially radical consequences for the position and historical mission of the discipline; in particular, it calls for a reconsideration, explanation and potential re-description of the ways in which International Studies interacts with the wider social world.

That the conclusions of this thesis might, in the future, be challenged according to new and doubtless more powerful standards of explanation is, perhaps, a welcome promise given the arguments we have made concerning epistemic precarity and historical delineation. However, despite this problematic position, we have considered the way in which the investigation of the problem of harm might constitute some of the least violent practices it is possible for International Studies to engage in.[551] In formulating the burden of reflexivity as an obligation to object adequacy, and where the objects of scientific investigation might be real, experiencing and suffering subjects, it should be evident that the weight placed on International Studies is significant. However, it is an obligation that the discipline must shoulder because it would claim objective value for the knowledge that it produces.

Final Thoughts

As an exercise in relating the production of knowledge to its normative aspects, this thesis has put forward the idea that the consistent fascination that the problem of harm holds for International Studies presents more than an aesthetic tendency, but constitutes an ontological principle with implications for the way IS reflects upon the production of knowledge. Moving beyond a subject-centred idea of scientific adequacy allows us to make some inroads into understanding the discipline as part of the chain of generations that Linklater and Elias highlight, situating political and ethical discussion in a reflexive position that maintains a specific role for the social sciences in the negotiation of the problem of harm. That theory is confronted by the impossible demand of suffering in the form of the problem of harm is the necessary counterpart to problem-solving strategies, allowing Critical Theory to fulfil the role of reflecting upon knowledge production as a limited and partial attempt to grasp a broader totality. Indeed, it is the shared historical nature of these efforts, as we saw in

[550] Levine, *Recovering International Relations*, 33.
[551] In agreement with Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations*, 157.

the first chapter, that places a concern with the problem of harm at the core of even the most impersonal and abstract conceptual frameworks.

The various debates that we saw in the first chapter operate against the background of a world that is not exhausted by our attempts to grasp it, a problem which Critical Theory highlights in the form of the gulf between experience and concept formation, and which raises the problem of harm to a kind of communal principle around which viewpoints in the discipline can congregate. Indeed, the potential universality of the problem of harm is a consequence of the intensification and density of global interconnection; it operates in historical period where the role of the modern states-system and capitalist production are likely to be internally related to many attempts to grasp its significance. Insofar as this is the case, the theories of International Studies cannot reflect on their own consistency in an ideal fashion but remain tied to their worldly origins in orientations that are normative all the way down. This task might consist purely of negating existing understandings were it not for the clear call that the problem of harm presents to International Studies that pushes toward harm's amelioration.[552]

This is not as much a call for a coherent and consistent theoretical outlook so much as it is a demonstration of the viability of a particular ethical stance toward the world on the part of International Studies. Taking each of the stands of this thesis separately militates strongly against the viability of systemic theory. There are insurmountable obstacles that stand in the way of a theorist who may wish to explicate a positive Adornian IR theory, just as critical realism is forced into an attitude whereby it must embrace epistemological opportunism in spite of the certainty that ontological approaches can provide. However, it is also the case that social science can and does operate. The fact that even the most sceptical theorists get out of bed in the morning is a damning indictment of those who would claim to avoid normative commitments; that they close the gap between positive knowledge claims and attempts at negation through action is a practice that is shot through with ethical content.[553] While acknowledging the irreducibility of the praxeological gap in theory, it is also the case that the circumscription of concepts in International Studies forces it closed, a practice of reification that is both the necessary supposition of our attempts to ameliorate harm and a point at which

[552] This mirrors Adorno's attitude in Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 11.

[553] The argument that sceptics toward real agency could not 'get out of bed' is Archer's. That this involves normative content (a position that Archer supports) is a consequence of critical realism has been argued in Chapter 4. Margaret Scotford Archer, *Being Human: The Problem of Agency* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

it may be forgotten.[554] This fact is one that demands reflexivity from the social scientist to the extent that it must be echoed in practice, a demand to hold a situation of dialectical tension between suffering and harm in a situation of considerable pressure toward its foreclosure.

The problem of harm provides a valuable starting point from which Critical Theory prompts us to reflect upon and critique the ethical content that is an essential aspect of International Studies. As a concept, it provides a visceral reminder of the way in which theory is tied to the world and which presents demands for both the most pressing practical involvement and the most consistent negative reflection. We can, therefore, consider it a constant reminder of the archetypal orientation of a discipline that is centred upon the idea of critical practice, one idea of which has been circumscribed in this thesis. Such a form of practice involves forms of explanation which bear witness to an unreconciled reality in which suffering is not accounted for, and as such social science must remain unreconciled as a reflection of this. It is this precarity, the knowledge that one may be 'thrust back into nature' into a situation of the most unintelligible suffering, that is the core of the relevance of a Critical Theory that begins with the problem of harm, and its most impossible demand.

[554] 'Whereas critical reason was able to show that maintenance of identity of consciousness presupposed a dialectic of subjective and objective reciprocity which was unified only in the constitutive activity of concrete subjectivity itself…' Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), xvi.

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